

Communicating Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes in the UK: examining tensions in discursive practice

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Abstract

Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes offer UK-government and EU-funded support and resettlement packages to asylum seekers and undocumented migrants to aid return to their countries of origin. These programmes have attracted criticism: in particular, a questioning of the return as ‘voluntary’.

This study investigates how social inequality is discursively maintained and challenged within AVR, particularly in relation to two of its central aspects: the *voluntariness* of the programmes and clients’ opportunities to make *informed decisions* about return. I combine a discursive analysis of institutional written texts and ethnographic interviews with staff, with observations from the two organisations involved – the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Refugee Action.

Through an analysis of rhetorical-discursive devices, I show how power relationships are maintained and challenged, providing the institutional context for the client-caseworker relationship. However, by exploring caseworkers’ positioning regarding ideological motivations for return and the gatekeeping relationship, I show how institutional, caseworker, and client power is negotiated and challenged by caseworkers. Addressing multilingualism, I show how caseworkers’ negotiation of top-down multilingualism and clients’ superdiversity may shape the environment in which clients are able to make informed decisions about return. I evidence how caseworkers are resourceful in challenging linguistic inequality, considering communicative strategies to increase clients’ opportunities to access information.

The findings in this research provide detailed discursive evidence of how AVR occupies an ideologically contested space, but how caseworkers are able to effectively negotiate this space to offer impartial advice for people returning. This research considers how this client-institution relationship, and the voluntariness of return, is complicated both by the mixed motivations underpinning AVR programmes, and the superdiversity of clients. I consider what this may mean regarding problems of trust within the AVR programmes, and the difficulties the Home Office may face in its decision to bring the programmes in-house from January 2016.

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1. Introduction

Quote 1:

“AVR is a dignified, safe, and cost-effective return option in which voluntariness is an important prerequisite. Voluntariness means that the return is based on a decision freely taken by the individual. A voluntary decision embraces two elements: freedom of choice, which is defined by the absence of any physical, psychological or material pressure; and an informed decision, which requires having enough accurate and objective information available upon which to base the decision. IOM is not involved in forced returns.”

International Organization for Migration (IOM) Helsinki (2015).

Quote 2:

“Repatriation cannot be termed ‘voluntary’ where the alternative is utter destitution, with denial of accommodation, basic support and the opportunity to work, or the prospect of children being taken into care, or months or years in detention. Nor can it be ‘voluntary’ where the prospect of obtaining recognition as a refugee has become remote because the system for the determination of asylum claims and appeals is deliberately under-funded, depriving increasing numbers of asylum seekers of any legal representation for this supremely important legal decision.”

Webber, Institute of Race Relations (2011:104).

1.1 Introduction and background

This research explores the role of discursive practice in the provision of Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes in the UK. AVR programmes are used by governments throughout the world to incentivise rejected asylum seekers and undocumented/irregular migrants to return to their countries of origin with resettlement packages. These packages may include impartial pre-decision advice, assistance with travel costs and documents, a relocation grant, temporary housing, and financial support to start a business, to re-train or to pay for education.

In examining the role of discursive practice, this study investigates how social inequality is created, maintained and challenged within the AVR programmes. I focus particularly on aspects of AVR which emerged – through literature reviews, and analysis of AVR talk and texts – as central to the AVR programmes: a) the *voluntariness* of the programmes, and b) clients’ opportunities to make an *informed decision* (oriented to in quote 1 above). This thesis combines data from ethnographic semi-structured research

interviews with staff from two organisations working on the programmes, ethnographic observations of their institutional workplaces, and institutional AVR-related documents – AVR information leaflets, booklets and online information.

In 1999, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) set up the first AVR programmes in the UK on behalf of the government, co-financed by the European Union's Returns Fund. However, in April 2011, Refugee Action (a charity providing advice to asylum seekers and refugees, and supporting IOM clients with AVR counselling), was successful in bidding for the entire AVR tender. Refugee Action is now funded to implement AVR programmes in the UK, and IOM's UK AVR programmes were subsequently closed.

The UK government and the United Nations (UN) consider AVR as the preferred option for rejected asylum seekers in the UK (IOM 2004; Ruben, van Houtte, and Davids 2009), being cheaper to administer, and regarded as more dignified than forced removal (deportation). However, the programmes in the UK have been particularly controversial. It has been argued that government asylum policy, which withdraws welfare support from asylum seekers upon rejecting their application for asylum, can effectively force rejected asylum seekers into a choice between destitution and AVR. This brings into question the 'voluntariness' of the programmes for many clients (Black and Gent 2004; Blitz, Sales and Marzano 2005; Burnett 2009; Strand, Bendixsen, Paasche and Schultz 2011). This policy is currently only applicable to people without children; a Home Office consultation document issued in August 2015, however, proposes extending this to rejected asylum seekers with dependent children (Home Office 2015b). For some AVR clients, there are few real alternatives, with many asylum seekers and undocumented/irregular migrants facing destitution, and eventually forced removal by the Home Office.

Tensions in the sector exist regarding how best to communicate these programmes and the option of AVR to people who may value this service, but in a context of widespread lack of trust of AVR (discussed in section 1.3.3), where the 'voluntariness' of the decision to return is in doubt for many, and the quality of the wider asylum process is questioned, as evident in quote 2 above (see also Amnesty 2013; Blitz *et al.* 2005; Bloch 2014). Having worked for IOM on these programmes from 2007-2009, I have a personal

interest in this area of study, and have experienced these tensions first-hand, which has provided me with, to some extent, an emic – or insider’s – perspective of IOM.

A small but fast-growing body of research exists on AVR programmes (e.g. Bak Riiskjaer and Nielsson 2008; Bradley 2006; Davids and van Houte 2008; Koser 2001; McGhee and Bennett 2014b; Ruben, van Houte, and Davids 2009). However, these studies have largely been approached from a legal, sociological or political perspective. Little research has been undertaken on the communicative processes within AVR schemes from a discourse-analytic standpoint, which this study takes. Georgi, in his recent exploration of IOM’s beneficiaries, argues that “[g]iven the size of IOM and the controversies surrounding it, the state of research on the organization is surprisingly weak” (2012:49). Indeed, IOM itself has noted that there “remain large gaps in information and a paucity of evaluative material” regarding AVR best practice (2004:9), and there have been international calls for further academic research on return assistance to inform policy and practice (Koser 2001; Schneider and Kreienbrink 2010). Despite a wealth of research on other aspects of asylum-seeking and irregular migration from a language and communication perspective (e.g. Blommaert 2001; Good 2007; Jacquemet 2011; Maryns 2006), little research exists on AVR specifically.

Further to this gap in research and the asymmetrical relationship between the client and institution from the outset, a discourse analysis of the power-ideology dimensions of AVR programmes therefore seems timely.

As evident in quotes 1 and 2 above, the integrity of AVR is heavily debated, with research within refugee and forced migration studies describing these programmes as “fiercely controversial” (Black and Gent 2004:7). However, as Ladegaard and Jenks argue in their paper on language and intercultural communication in the workplace, it is vital that academics, practitioners and NGOs, amongst others, “work together, drawing on each other’s expertise to solve complex communicative problems in the workplace and together propose ways to move forward” (2015:3).

In exploring issues around language and power within this institutional-client relationship, the analyses combine discourse-analytic frameworks and concepts (introduced in section 1.6) to examine two pivotal tenets of AVR: *voluntariness* and *informedness* (that is, being able to make an informed decision). In doing so, chapter 4

investigates how AVR service-providers construct the voluntariness of AVR via institutional written texts (included in appendices 1-2), and how, in turn, the AVR programmes are ideologically justified. Chapter 5 then examines how staff (caseworkers) in my research interviews negotiate the controversial aspect of voluntariness, and challenge the perceived institutional ideologies and power dynamics inherent in the programmes. Lastly, chapter 6 focuses on clients' opportunities to make an informed decision by examining how caseworkers negotiate top-down multilingualism, and clients' superdiversity (Vertovec 2007, discussed in section 2.4.2) in research interviews. The intercultural aspect of this AVR client-caseworker relationship adds a further layer of complexity to this already inherently asymmetrical relationship. Ultimately, I consider what this may mean for clients' opportunities to access AVR information, elements of the programmes, and to prepare for return and reintegration.

Through this close and situated textual analysis, this study contributes to the developing academic body of literature on AVR by providing an in-depth study of discursive processes within AVR programmes, allowing for a better understanding of the dynamics within this complex social process. My study moreover complements the significant body of critical and ethnographic discourse-analytic research conducted in multilingual workplaces. It aims to develop our understanding of how institutional representatives negotiate perceived institutional ideologies and power relations, multilingualism and clients' linguistic resources.

The present chapter is divided as follows:

- 1.1 (Introduction and background)
- 1.2 Overview of IOM, Refugee Action, and AVR programme details
- 1.3 Institutional communication and gatekeeping in multilingual workplaces
- 1.4 Complications of context: conflicting motivations and trust
- 1.5 Theoretical approach: Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Linguistic Ethnography (LE)
- 1.6 Analytic frameworks
- 1.7 Research questions
- 1.8 Thesis structure

1.2 Overview of IOM, Refugee Action, and AVR programme details

Before going further, it is useful to give a brief background to the two institutions administering the AVR programmes: IOM (in section 1.2.1) and Refugee Action (in section 1.2.2), as well as the AVR programmes themselves (in section 1.2.3).

1.2.1 International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Background

The IOM is an inter-governmental project-based organisation, funded by states around the world to carry out migration-based work. Each of the 157 (IOM Geneva 2015) member states contributes a membership fee for core funding, while migration-based projects are proposed for individual funding. IOM headquarters' website describes its work as follows:

“IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.” (IOM Geneva 2015)

IOM has had a presence in the UK since 1992, but set up the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes for the UK government in 1999, co-financed by the European Union's Return Fund.

IOM has offices in over 100 countries, and is the largest provider of AVR programmes in the world. Kalm, in her examination of global migration management, describes IOM as “exclusively dedicated to migration” but standing “formally outside the UN [United Nations] system and mainly works as a service organization for states” (2012:24). This existence ‘outside’ of the UN system results in IOM lacking a protection mandate. As Geiger and Pécoud state:

“[w]hile UNHCR's [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] work relies on the standards contained in the Geneva Convention, and while the whole UN system is broadly based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (and all the human rights

instruments that derive from it), agencies such as IOM ... are not committed to such binding treatments and are therefore only responsible to their member states” (2012:13).

IOM UK’s head office is in London, with sub-offices during its administration of the AVR programmes located in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol and Glasgow. A team of staff was also based at Heathrow to assist people in transit. IOM sub-contracted the ‘pre-decision’ advice work (providing non-directional advice to people considering return) to Refugee Action’s Choice’s team. The two organisations worked together, signposting clients to each other, where appropriate. Upon losing the entire AVR contract to Refugee Action in April 2011, all IOM sub-offices closed. The London head office reduced its staff, with a core team remaining to continue with other migration-related projects such as counter-trafficking, migration and development, refugee resettlement and family reunification (IOM UK 2015). Many staff members from across the UK-based organisation transferred to the new AVR programmes at Refugee Action.

Staff

Staff roles at IOM were split into three key areas: operations, communications and reintegration. The communication staff were responsible for outreach work, sharing information about the programmes with community groups, agencies, educational establishments, public sector organisations, religious organisations, at drop-ins and with any other organisation who may be willing to share the information with their clients, should they be interested. Operational staff – country specialist caseworkers – were allocated clients based on clients’ nationality and assisted them through the entire AVR application process, from the initial contact through to departure. Reintegration staff assisted clients to access and spend funds upon return. Sub-office staff had primarily either operations or communications responsibilities, but were expected to support Head Office staff, as appropriate.

My role at IOM

I worked for IOM between 2007 and 2009 as an Operations Assistant in a sub-office of three staff (which also included a Director and a Communications Assistant). The Operations Assistant role primarily involved supporting people to apply for AVR programmes, explaining the programmes, and conducting drop-ins in various locations around the region in order to be available should people want to discuss applying, or speak to someone face-to-face about an existing AVR application. Operation Assistants could complete AVR applications with clients, but the application forms were then sent to the specific caseworker for the country of return in the IOM London operations team to progress the application and carry out logistical work. I therefore have a broad understanding of the programmes, though specialist casework was not my area of responsibility. Due to the size of the sub-offices, in practice the office workload was often shared, so I was also responsible for aspects of communications work on an ad-hoc basis, conducting outreach meetings and presentations to agencies within the voluntary and public sector, and refugee community organisations.

Having worked on the AVR programmes first-hand, I felt there were tensions in the communication of the AVR programmes, which had the potential to impact on how clients accessed support and information. I left IOM to pursue exploring these tensions through this research.

The following section provides background information about Refugee Action.

1.2.2 Refugee Action

Background

Refugee Action is a charity established in 1981 to support refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. Refugee Action's website describes its vision as follows:

“Refugee Action helps people who’ve survived some of the world’s worst regimes to find the basic support they need to live with dignity. Then we make sure they have the opportunity to build a safe, happy and productive life.” (Refugee Action 2015a)

In April 2011, Refugee Action's Choices service won the funding to administer the three AVR programmes originally set up by IOM. However, as announced by Refugee Action in a briefing on the 27th July 2015 (see appendix 7a), its funding will come to an end on the 31st December 2015, following a Home Office decision to deliver the AVR service itself from that date forward.

Discussing the Home Office's cessation of funding for the Choices' AVR programmes, Refugee Action describes the principles underpinning the service:

"...it is independent from government, confidential, that it values the trust of its clients, that it is client centred – impartially helping people to make choices and that it seeks to help people achieve meaningfully sustainable outcomes." (Refugee Action, July 2015 briefing, see appendix 7a)

Following severe cuts to its traditional support and advocacy services in 2011 (Refugee Action 2011), including the termination of funding for its important 'Refugee Integration and Employment Service' (RIES), AVR became Refugee Action's main project. Refugee Action, however, continues to pursue other smaller projects, including the Refugee Wellbeing Project, Preventing Asylum Homelessness and Increasing Asylum Justice, amongst others.

Since taking on the AVR programmes, Refugee Action's head office in London is currently located in IOM's former office space, with IOM moving to a smaller office within the same building. Regional offices providing AVR assistance are located in Birmingham (where Refugee Action's AVR advice call centre is located), Manchester, Liverpool, Leicester, Bristol, Cardiff and Glasgow.

Staff

Unlike IOM, Refugee Action carries out the entire (pre-departure) AVR process, including the pre-decision advice element that IOM had previously sub-contracted to Refugee Action. While IOM divided the workload according to country, Refugee Action now splits

the work according to task, having pre-approval, logistics, and reintegration caseworkers, as well as outreach staff (who carry out similar work to IOM as described above).

Having given some background to the institutions, in the following section I broadly describe the AVR programmes.

1.2.3 Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes

IOM set up three main AVR programmes, which were continued by Refugee Action:

- VARRP: 'Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme' for asylum seekers at any stage of the asylum process.
- AVRIM: 'Assisted Voluntary Return for Irregular Migrants' for migrants in the UK without immigration documentation, and who have not applied for asylum.
- AVRFC: 'Assisted Voluntary Return for Families and Children', specifically designed for returning families and children, regardless of their immigration status.

All of these programmes provide assistance with travel documentation by liaising with clients' embassies/consulates and financing new passports or Emergency Travel Documents (ETDs). These programmes are responsible for arranging and paying for flights, and occasionally onward travel in the country of origin. Staff at IOM overseas 'Missions' (IOM offices), or Refugee Action's overseas partners (Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)), sometimes meet clients at the airport in the country of origin, if necessary. They also assist clients to plan for their return and reintegration.

Applicants to VARRP, AVRFC, and AVRIM applicants who are considered particularly vulnerable, are eligible for financial reintegration assistance. The Home Office has varied the amount available since the initial programmes; however, in 2015 it stands at £1,500 for individuals, and £2,000 for each family member returning. The first £500 is provided on a Start Card: this is a payment card that can be used at cashpoints at the airport or upon return. The remainder is provided (when possible) as in-kind assistance, which is accessed by contacting Refugee Action's Choices' team (or previously IOM), or the partner organisation in the country of return, if one exists. The financial aspect of the reintegration assistance is designed to enable clients to produce a sustainable income upon return. Funds can be used towards setting up a business, training, education,

healthcare and accommodation, and clients are encouraged to plan how they intend to use it before return.

Application process

AVR clients can either make enquiries by telephone, email or visit the offices in person. If someone is unsure about return, the Choices team (whether during IOM's tenure or not) will explore all their options with them, providing impartial advice. When visiting the office, clients are usually seen in individual meeting rooms, and caseworkers can use a telephone interpreting service, or request assistance from a colleague who speaks a shared language, should they decide an interpreter is required.

Once someone has decided to return, they can complete an AVR application form with the caseworker in the office, with staff in a regional office, with their solicitor or an advice agency, or by downloading the form from the IOM or Refugee Action website and submitting by post or fax. The application is then processed by the caseworker and sent to the AVR team in the Home Office for approval. Upon approval, clients begin to arrange their travel documents with the caseworker's assistance, visiting their embassy or consulate if required. Applicants to the AVRIM programme must have their fingerprints taken by Home Office staff. Caseworkers and clients generally keep in regular contact throughout this period arranging return dates and planning how to use the reintegration assistance (e.g. to start a business or re-train). Client meetings can vary between a short visit to submit documents, to a long meeting (often over an hour) to discuss reintegration needs and plan their return.

Clients are required to return via AVR within three months from the date their AVR application is approved by the Home Office. If they do not return within this time, their application is cancelled by the Home Office; they must submit a fresh application, should they still wish to return. Clients are only allowed to submit a maximum of two applications to the AVR programme unless they have a valid reason why they could not leave – for example, if they had to attend hospital, or if their children needed to wait to undertake school exams. The period for the institution to arrange the return journey varies from country to country, usually depending on the travel document requirements for that

country, and the availability of flights. Clients must then access their reintegration assistance upon return, and are required to submit receipts in order to access the funds from the programmes. The extent to which applicants plan reintegration spending before departure varies: some applicants will have written an entire business plan, or have secured their place in an educational establishment long before they fly, while others may prefer to decide how they use their reintegration assistance upon return.

Having given a broad overview of IOM and Refugee Action, and the AVR programmes, below I present the importance of AVR information for both clients and the integrity of the programmes; I then situate the study within institutional gatekeeping research.

1.3 Institutional communication and gatekeeping in multilingual workplaces

1.3.1 AVR information as crucial in preparing for return and reintegration

Quote 1, in section 1 above, positions clients' ability to make an informed decision about return as central to the definition of AVR, and crucial to labelling return as voluntary. Rock argues that an important aspect of consent "is about *voluntariness*, consenting willingly, which entails *informedness* in that to consent willingly, one must understand what one consents to" (Rock, in press: 2). This foregrounds the importance of AVR information in the process of *voluntary* return.

The ultimate goal of the reintegration element of AVR programmes in the UK (what is institutionally considered a 'successful' return) is to provide clients with a *sustainable* return to their countries of origin (IOM 2011, Refugee Action 2013). For example, in its *Stories of Return* booklet, IOM states:

"The aim of the Reintegration Fund is to facilitate sustainable return to the country of origin. The assistance is designed to assist people in finding income generating activities to become financially independent." (IOM: publication page 2, appendix 2a).

Although the goal of the reintegration fund is to provide a “sustainable” return for clients, and research agrees that a sustainable return for a client will depend on a variety of interlinking factors, there is little agreement as to exactly what they are, and how they contribute to a sustainable return, primarily due to inconclusive research (Arowolo 2000; Black and Gent 2004; Koser 2001). It is, as Bak Riiskjaer and Nielsson state, a “complex, many-faceted process” (2008:20).

There is, however, a general consensus in refugee and forced migration literature that the *preparation* for return affects the extent of a returning migrant’s reintegration (Arowolo 2000; Cassarino 2008; UNHCR 2008). It is therefore possible to conclude that the more access clients have to AVR information, then the more opportunity for both making an informed decision about return, and for being better prepared for return. Therefore the greater chance there is of clients’ benefiting from sustainable reintegration upon return.

Having established the importance of AVR information, I now situate the study within institutional gatekeeping research.

1.3.2 Gatekeeping studies

Erickson and Shultz’s (1982) research on face-to-face interactions between US college students and their counsellors is considered a seminal study in gatekeeping research. They established gatekeeping encounters, previously overlooked institutional client-adviser meetings, as an important setting for close discourse analysis and research on social equality. They define institutional gatekeeping as: “brief encounters in which two persons meet, usually as strangers, with one of them having authority to make decisions that affect the other’s future” (1982:xi). Their research highlighted these often brief everyday interactions as situations where crucial decisions were being made that could seriously affect the life chances of the ‘gatekeepee’ (the receiver of the service), in Erickson and Shultz’s case, the student. A significant body of research exists on institutional gatekeeping, with many studies focusing on intercultural gatekeeping encounters (e.g. Baptiste and Sieg 2007; Codó 2008a; Jupp, Roberts, and Cook-Gumperz, 1982; Roberts 2000 and 1985).

The institutional relationship between clients and caseworkers within the AVR process can be viewed as an archetypal gatekeeping encounter. In administering these programmes, IOM and Refugee Action staff can be considered as institutional gatekeepers, providing information about, or putting into place, what could be crucial life chances (Roberts 2000) for the applicants. In fact, AVR programmes are often framed as offering rejected asylum seekers the opportunity “to re-start their lives” (IOM *Stories of Return* booklet, appendix 2a), underscoring the significance of these rarely studied client-caseworker encounters.

However, as long as an applicant meets the basic eligibility requirements for the programme, their application is forwarded by the caseworker to the Home Office for approval; it is rare that an application is not processed by caseworkers, or is rejected by the Home Office. So, although the caseworkers’ and Home Office’s acceptance of the application is a traditional ‘gatekeeping’ scenario, in which the application is accepted or rejected, it is the gatekeeping of access to AVR information and components of the AVR programmes to superdiverse (Vertovec 2007) clients, which is of interest to this study.

During client-caseworker interactions, IOM and Refugee Action staff provide details about the programmes, and discuss and process people’s applications to return to their countries of origin. If eligible, they may also establish what reintegration needs the applicant has, and how the institution may be able to assist them. Other elements of support are also available under the AVR programmes, which have included medical support (medication and/or medical personnel to travel with them), business training, assistance at the airport, psychological support upon return, taxis to the airport, housing and extra baggage allowances. All these aspects are also potentially discussed and requested or arranged during these client-caseworker meetings. As Trinch (2007) found in her study on women seeking court protection due to domestic violence, administrative staff wield significant bureaucratic power in terms of how the individuals’ application is *processed*, although it is often a higher official who has the final decision about the application. Thus, depending on their specialism, caseworkers are variously tasked with:

- 1) Providing appropriate **information** about the AVR programmes, the country of return and how to access reintegration assistance upon return -

- responsible for the client's decision being an 'informed' one (Choices' staff also discuss alternative options to AVR)
- 2) Completing and submitting to the Home Office a client's AVR **application** (with the client's permission)
 - 3) Putting in place appropriate **assistance** for the client in the UK (e.g. travel to embassies), as well as reintegration plans and assistance for return.

The activity in these on-going gatekeeping interactions (whether in person, by phone, email or letter) can be considered 'high stake' (Kerekes 2007) – the information or support which AVR clients receive can be regarded as having a direct impact on their lives. If they do not get appropriate assistance or information, or do not understand how to access their assistance upon return, they may be at risk of returning without the resources required to actually 're-start their lives', or without having made an 'informed' decision.

Although this thesis does not analyse these gatekeeping encounters directly (no interactional client-caseworker data was collected), the data I have collected (institutional texts, ethnographic interviews, ethnographic observations) frame these interactions as gatekeeping encounters. By exploring these client-caseworker interactions as gatekeeping encounters, I foreground the important role caseworkers have in mediating AVR information, and the distribution of aspects of the AVR programmes. As Sarangi and Slembrouck argue, bureaucrats (such as the AVR caseworkers) are not "passive agents" as their decisions can have lasting effects on the way life-chances are created or denied" (1996:37). Furthermore, by foregrounding the gatekeeping aspect of the client-caseworker relationship, I foster an examination of how caseworkers negotiate this asymmetric relationship, and the challenges they may face in doing this with superdiverse (Vertovec 2007) clients. As Roberts, Davies and Jupp argue in their linguistic ethnography of gatekeeping encounters in multi-ethnic workplaces, "gatekeepers... can unconsciously and powerfully contribute to the perpetuation of disadvantage and discrimination" (1992:19). Conversely, they can also challenge it.

The following section considers the socio-political context of providing AVR, discussing issues that complicate the provision of AVR information.

1.4 Contextualising AVR programmes: motivations and trust

In order to give some background and context to the challenge of communicating AVR, this section refers to contemporary research from the discipline of refugee and forced migration studies, and conference reports from within the migration sector. It is complemented by my own ethnographic data from periods spent in IOM and Refugee Action offices, as well as time working with IOM. This section is split into the following sub-sections: conflicting and multiple motivations, in section 1.4.1, and issues of trust within AVR administration, in section 1.4.2.

1.4.1 Conflicting and multiple motivations for offering AVR

From a Political Studies perspective, Blitz, Sales and Marzano's (2005) review of motivations used in promoting return programmes argues that AVR programmes "are a result of complex negotiation between a number of governments and intergovernmental agencies often with conflicting agendas" (2005:183). Blitz *et al.* (2005) propose there are three key types of argument which are routinely used in promoting AVR by governments and institutional partners. These are: *justice-based*, *human-capital*, and *burden-relieving arguments* (2005:184). Briefly: justice-based arguments construct return as the natural conclusion to the end of the refugee cycle. Human-capital arguments are said to promote return on the basis that returnees have gained skills in the UK that can be invested back in their home country in its reconstruction. Lastly, burden-relieving arguments conflict with the first two types as they are "based on the notion that large numbers of refugees can cause social and political problems in the country of exile" (Blitz *et al.* 2005:183).

Blitz *et al.* (2005) maintain that these three arguments are employed depending on the intended audience, which they say can include the returning migrants themselves, the governments of the countries of origin, or domestic politics. They state that "[t]he first two involve some shared agenda with potential participants in voluntary programmes, while the last suggests an opposition and cannot coexist with voluntary programmes." (Blitz *et al.* 2005:184). They argue that AVR programmes are *promoted* using justice-based and human-capital arguments, but it is the "domestic interest based arguments, rather

than those founded on the protection of human rights” (2005:182) which drive the policy-making agenda and which are the impetus behind these programmes.

Indeed Koch, in her mapping of the changeable relationship between IOM and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in their work on AVR, argues that we should study both “coercive and so-called AVRs under the common heading ‘state-induced returns’” (2013:4). Koch firmly asserts that the institutions administering AVR programmes are supporting “domestic governments in reaching their control objectives” (2013:3), suggesting AVR is essentially just another route to achieving the same (burden-relieving) goals. She argues that the migration research community’s previous bias towards the study of deportation and *involuntary* return (over AVR) “tends to obscure the fact that there are other more ambiguous and more subtle ways in which states pursue the return of migrants” (2013:4). It is how these ‘ambiguous’ and ‘subtle ways’ are managed and negotiated by the sub-contracted institutions (IOM and Refugee Action), which is explored in this thesis.

Ambiguity regarding how these multiple and conflicting motivations are driving the administration of AVR appears to be linked to trust problems faced by IOM and Refugee Action, hindering clients’ opportunities to become informed about AVR. The following section reviews these trust issues.

1.4.2 Trust

Lack of trust in AVR is considered (as expanded on below) an obstacle in clients’ opportunity to make an informed decision about AVR. During my time at IOM, increasing clients’, and potential clients’ trust in IOM and its AVR programmes (in order to increase clients’ opportunity to access AVR information and make an informed decision about return) was perceived by staff to be a key element of the outreach role. Staff sought to counter charges that IOM was motivated not by the best interests of the client, but by government out-migration goals. Refugee Action appears to have similar issues regarding countering lack of trust. In a letter to James Brokenshire MP, Minister of State for Security and Immigration (see appendix 7b), expressing concern about the future of AVR, Refugee Action argues that its status as independent from the Home Office is important in its

ability to engender trust within the client-base. Refugee Action cites Home Office-commissioned research which proposes “developing asylum seekers’ trust in AVR programmes, for example by engaging with community groups and demonstrating the programmes’ effectiveness” (Thiel and Gillian 2010:1) as a key step to increasing participation and improving clients’ reintegration upon return. Refugee Action claims that asylum seekers and undocumented migrants are “suspicious of government funded returns programmes” (appendix 7b). The charity suggests that contrary to government goals, fewer people will access AVR programmes when they are taken in-house by the Home Office, as planned from 1st January 2016.

Trust has also specifically been highlighted as a key problem in administering AVR programmes: sector and governmental reports (echoing internal institutional strategy documents) conclude that a lack of trust in AVR programmes and the agencies that administer them is an obstacle in engaging interested AVR applicants and offering a sustainable return. For example, a report commissioned by the UK Home Office in 2004, written by researchers within refugee and forced migration studies, concludes that:

“...there is also a critical issue of trust, in that the individuals interviewed often remain to be convinced that the UK Government is sincere in its efforts to support voluntary return and the reconstruction of post-conflict states, rather than simply forcing people to go back.”

Black, Koser, Munk, Atfield, D’Onofrio, and Tiemoko (2004:24)

This identifies the problem of trust as a matter of credibility, with clients lacking trust in the *intentions* and *motives* of the UK government funding (and promoting) the programmes (as discussed above). Little has changed since 2004, with a 2012 conference report aimed at improving the effectiveness of AVR programmes highlighting that a “lack of knowledge and trust in AVR” was a current key obstacle to the programmes’ effectiveness (Wilton Park Conference Report 2012:5).

This lack of trust stems from a concern that the institutions running the programmes are working not in the best interests of the client, but rather in the interests of the government. Blitz *et al.* found in their interviews with Afghans in the UK that there was an awareness of the threat of deportation (and the government’s dual goals) and this therefore “undermined their trust in them [the return programmes] and the organisations

promoting and implementing them” (2005:196), because the government was also seeking to deport them through other means – forced removal.

Research, again from the refugee studies/forced migration discipline, has found that the lack of trust in the institutions administering AVR specifically extends to AVR *information* provided by them. Interviews with asylum seekers on a similar (IOM) AVR programme in Norway found that there was a lack of trust regarding information provided by IOM (Strand, Bendixsen, Paasche, Schultz, 2011). Blitz *et al.* (2005) also found that trust was a key theme regarding information about conditions upon return. If accounts of return differ between sources of information, clients have to make a choice between which ‘reality’ or ‘account’ they trust – that of IOM/Refugee Action or that of known others such as their friends, relatives and other members of the community of the same nationality. Black *et al.* (2004:40) found that it is information from refugee community organisations, and known others, which clients trust more, although of course the information may be less accurate.

As well as *clients* lacking trust in the government, AVR agencies and AVR written materials, there is also evidence of a lack of trust from *stakeholders* within the sector, which I experienced working as a staff member conducting outreach work within the voluntary sector at IOM. IOM were regularly turned away from exhibiting at – and taking part in – community events. IOM written materials were often removed from public display areas and leaflet advice stands by staff members from other organisations (such as refugee community support and advice organisations) within the sector for fear of affecting, understandably, their long-established trusting relationship with migrant communities. IOM faced small protests at regional offices by the ‘No Borders’ campaign group, who accused IOM of being a “deportation mechanism” (Brum No Borders 2008), being part of the government’s enforcement strategy. IOM were accused by leaders of refugee community organisations of staging teleconferences with previous IOM returnees: participating returnees sharing their experiences of IOM and AVR were dismissed as lacking credibility due to being perceived as ‘paid off’. Simply providing leaflets about AVR was seen by some voluntary sector organisations and members of the public at community events as actively persuading asylum seekers to return ‘home’ (following Hammond 1999, I acknowledge that return is for many reasons not always a return home for people). This concern over trust then partly extended to the new

providers, Refugee Action. When the organisation was awarded the government funding to administer the AVR programmes, I witnessed a debate (likely one example of many) amongst stakeholders at a cross-sector meeting about how this would affect Refugee Action's reputation and widely regarded and valued trusting relationship with the people they support.

Having identified key tensions affecting the delivery of AVR programmes, demonstrating that lack of trust in AVR originates in part from the multiple motivations behind AVR, and considered the potential role of trust in hindering informedness, below I outline the theoretical and methodological approach this study takes.

1.5 Theoretical background: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Linguistic Ethnography (LE)

This section gives an overview of the study's theoretical approach. Taking a qualitative approach, this research draws on both Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (e.g. Blommaert 2005; Fairclough 2001; van Dijk 2006; Wodak and Meyer 2009) and Linguistic Ethnography (e.g. Creese, 2008; Rampton, Tusting, Maybin, Barwell, Creese, and Lytra 2004; Tusting and Maybin 2007), in the analysis of discourse within AVR programmes. In order to show how I combine these two approaches, I will briefly introduce each one (see section 3.1.4 for a fuller discussion). Van Dijk defines CDA as:

“...a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” (2006:352)

CDA is oriented towards addressing social problems, and as such has been used to explore institutionally reproduced power (Blommaert 2005:25), challenging assumptions in workplace settings where there is often an asymmetry of rights from the outset. It is therefore ideally suited to examining asymmetry of power within AVR programmes.

Social science researchers agree that discourse broadly refers to language-in-use; however, there is much debate on what else it can refer to, dependent on the goals of the research (for a full discussion see Jaworski and Coupland (2009:1) and Wodak and Meyer

(2009:6)). In this study, as well as language-in-use, the term 'discourse' will also describe what Fairclough (within his CDA approach) calls "a type of social practice" (1992:28), recognising that discourse constitutes social life and social practice. By considering discourse in this way, we can see how relevant discourse is to power, and how it can help to produce and reproduce unequal relationships of power (Wodak and Meyer 2009:5) within the AVR process. Linking discourse and social life is key for CDA because it allows us to take a critical approach by examining how language affects and reflects social positions. As Blommaert states, the *critical* aspect of CDA analysis "is in the interplay between discourse and society" (2005:39). By taking a close look at discursive practices within the AVR programme, we can understand how the potential for an unequal power relationship is challenged, maintained or managed by the institutions and staff. Thus, my study builds on van Dijk's approach that CDA "focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of *power* and *dominance* in society" (2006:353).

Combining this CDA approach with Linguistic Ethnography (LE) addresses criticisms of a more traditional CDA approach making assumptions about context (Blommaert 2005). In their formative paper examining the foundations of LE, Rampton *et al.* argue that "language and the social world are mutually shaping, and that close analysis of situated language use can provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity" (2004:2). Like CDA, LE then also regards discourse as constitutive, focusing on the relationship between language and social life. Blackledge and Creese report that LE "typically takes a post-structuralist orientation by critiquing essentialist accounts of social life" (2010:61), and searches for uniqueness as well as patterns in discourse. As such, an LE approach does not overlook what Rampton *et al.* refer to as "the complex cultural and semiotic ecologies that give any phenomenon its meaning" (2004:2), offering an approach which will assist in examining the nuances and tensions within AVR.

By combining an LE approach with CDA, this study aims to be self-reflective and critical, striving to recognise and address the context I bring both as a researcher, and as an ex-employee of IOM (as detailed in section 1.2.1). In doing so, my CDA approach is enriched with ethnographic methods and theory, with ethnography providing the contextualised analysis which a CDA approach would not historically provide, with context

not being assumed but analysed alongside the texts. As stressed by Blackledge and Creese, an LE approach proposes that “ethnography can benefit from the analytical frameworks provided by linguistics, while linguistics can benefit from the processes of reflexive sensitivity required in ethnography” (2010:63).

Based on Blommaert's (2005) assertion that CDA should result in a heightened awareness of hidden power dimensions, the use of CDA, combined with LE, seeks here to reveal ideological presuppositions (“propositions which are taken by the producer of the text as already established or ‘given’” (Fairclough 1992:120)) and constructions within the discourse of AVR. Power will be explored in the following ways:

- Firstly in chapter 4, by examining how power relationships are challenged and maintained in institutional AVR written materials, particularly via orienting to the topic of voluntariness, providing the institutional context for the client-caseworker relationship;
- Secondly in chapter 5, by examining how institutional, staff, and client power (via voluntariness) is represented and challenged; by exploring caseworkers' positioning regarding ideological motivations for return and the gatekeeping relationship;
- Finally in chapter 6, by examining how the caseworkers negotiate top-down multilingualism and clients' particular linguistic resources which allow them the opportunity (or power) to act in making an ‘informed decision’ about return, or in gaining access to institutional resources which may contribute to preparedness for return.

Having outlined the broad theoretical approach, the following section outlines the main analytical frameworks which will be employed.

1.6 Analytic frameworks

Van Dijk states that CDA is theoretically and analytically diverse, arguing that “[c]ritical analysis of conversation is very different from an analysis of news reports in the press or of lessons and teaching at school” (2006:353). However, the aims of each of these analyses may be shared, examining how discourse may contribute to maintaining, challenging, or managing social dominance or relations of power. Given the different data collected for this research, the analysis necessarily makes use of a range of analytic frameworks. These are introduced briefly below, and how they relate to the goals of each analysis chapter.

This study employs methods from Discourse Analysis (DA), involving the close analysis of language-in-use. As Fairclough argues, this involves “...committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions” (2001:21). Each analysis chapter employs different discourse-analytic frameworks, as introduced below.

In order to examine how the institutions construct power-relations via institutional written materials (specifically, AVR leaflets and stories about clients’ return experiences, entitled *Stories of Return*), chapter 4 employs various analytic approaches, primarily under the macro analytic concept of ‘accounts’ (Buttny 1993), in justifying and defending the controversial aspects of AVR. In order to identify arguments accounting for AVR within institutional texts, and the ideological construction of AVR, this study uses Arribas-Ayllon *et al.*’s Rhetorical Discourse Analysis framework (RDA) (2011a), analysing the use of various rhetorical devices, including constructed dialogue, pronouns and modalisation. Still under the umbrella of analysing accounting work, this is combined with the analysis of van Leeuwen’s Social Actor Analysis framework (1996), to examine how social actors are represented. In using these analytic frameworks to examine institutional texts, taking a CDA approach, I make visible “politically and ideologically salient features” constituting power relations (Jaworski and Coupland 2009:474) within AVR. I consider all discursive analyses in relation to the ethnographically-gained contextual information in which the texts were produced and used.

Chapter 5 takes a social-constructionist approach to identity, viewing it as “something that is constituted through social action and especially through language” (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:588). This chapter employs positioning theory (Davies and Harré 1990), and the analytic concept of interpretative repertoires (Wetherell and Potter 1988), in order to examine how caseworkers take up temporary positions, and negotiate institutional ideologies in the research interviews, contributing to their professional identities. Thus, I explore how, in positioning themselves, caseworkers may negotiate being positioned by their employer. In this sense, this analysis exemplifies a middle ground between adopting a traditional CDA approach, and conducting a more interactionally-focused CA-influenced study (de Fina 2013). Following Bucholtz and Hall (2005), this study takes an inclusive approach in the analysis of discursive devices

contributing to the formation of identity. It includes the analysis of narrative, implicature, presupposition, and devices from the RDA framework (employed in chapter 4) such as categorisation, constructed dialogue, modalisation, contrast and pronouns, used by caseworkers to account for their work.

Following Blommaert (2005), chapter 6 takes an ecological approach in analysing how caseworkers negotiate top-down institutional multilingualism. In this chapter I follow principles of New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič, 2005), and apply the concepts of translanguaging (Li and Zhu, 2013) and mode-switching (Baynham 1997:294, Li 2011b:379), to examine how caseworkers display resourcefulness in orienting to the perceived gap between institutional multilingualism and clients' linguistic repertoires (Blommaert and Backus 2013), challenging institutional assumptions regarding clients and language.

The following section sets out the research questions for the thesis developing from the above discussion.

1.7 Research questions

Exploring the central research question “what can the study of discourse contribute to our understanding of Assisted Voluntary Return programmes?”, this thesis responds to the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How do IOM and Refugee Action discursively account for AVR in their institutional written materials? (chapter 4)
- **RQ2:** How do the caseworkers at IOM and Refugee Action discursively position themselves with regard to institutional ideologies and construct professional identities in the research interview data? (chapter 5)
- **RQ3:** How do caseworkers discursively position themselves with regard to their clients' linguistic resources and institutional multilingualism in the research interview data? (chapter 6)

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review divided into the following sections:

- section 2.2 evaluates analytic frameworks and concepts employed in the analysis of institutional texts in chapter 4, and caseworker research interviews in chapters 5 and 6. These include literature on accounts analysis, Rhetorical Discourse Analysis (RDA) and Social Actor Analysis.
- section 2.3 reviews literature on discursive features contributing to the construction of caseworkers' identities, including positioning theory and interpretative repertoires, employed in chapters 5 and 6.
- section 2.4 explores literature on multilingual literacies, linguistic repertoires and translanguaging, used in chapter 6.

Chapter 3 details the methodological considerations of combining a Critical Discourse Analytic approach with a Linguistic Ethnographic one. I describe data selection methods and problems encountered in negotiating access with the institutions, and how these were overcome. I provide an overview of the approaches taken within this thesis to ethnographic interviewing and observation, ethics, data transcription and analysis.

Chapter 4 examines how AVR is accounted for through IOM and Refugee Action's institutional written materials. I examine key texts from both institutions – the standard English-language AVR leaflet and the *Stories of Return* publications, which are narratives of people who have already returned via AVR. I explore how power relations are constructed, challenged and maintained in these texts, especially with regard to the voluntariness of return.

Chapter 5 investigates how caseworkers orient to client agency via the topic of *voluntariness*, accounting for their involvement in this troubled aspect of their work. I then explore how caseworkers position themselves in research interviews relative to the institutions' perceived ideological motivations for offering the programmes. This chapter

then further examines how caseworkers construct differing professional identities via interpretative repertoires of *advocate* and *gatekeeper* in response to their difficult position, imposed by Home Office policy. I consider the function of these repertoires for the caseworker, and the contribution they make to constructions of client-caseworker power relationships.

Chapter 6 focuses on one aspect of AVR contributing to clients becoming informed, that is: examining how caseworkers position themselves relative to top-down multilingualism and clients' linguistic resources in order to communicate AVR information. In doing so I investigate how caseworkers orient to institutional assumptions regarding clients' linguistic repertoires and literacies. This allows me to consider how their negotiations of these assumptions may influence how AVR is provided to clients, and thus clients' opportunities to be informed regarding their return.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by summarising findings from each analytic chapter, addressing the research questions in turn. I consider the findings in terms of wider research literature. In addressing the limitations of the study, I recommend further areas for future research. And lastly, with the goal of improving the experience of the programme for both clients and staff, I reflect on some potential practical recommendations for the administration of AVR.

Having introduced the thesis and outlined its structure, in the next chapter I review pertinent literature to support the analysis.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter forms the literature review of the thesis, and is divided into the following sections, broadly reflecting the order in which the literature is applied in the thesis, and therefore relating to the content of each of the three analytic chapters:

- section 2.2 reviews literature on accounts analysis, and evaluates the analytic frameworks of Rhetorical Discourse Analysis (RDA) and Social Actor Analysis in their application to data in chapters 4, 5 and 6.
- section 2.3 reviews literature on the discursive construction of identity. It focuses on *positioning* theory and *interpretative repertoires* employed in the analysis of research interviews with caseworkers in chapter 5 (in combination with rhetorical-discursive devices, discussed in section 2.2).
- section 2.4 reviews issues in multilingual gatekeeping encounters, and key concepts regarding multilingualism (e.g. superdiversity, linguistic repertoires, literacies).
- Section 2.5 summarises findings

In selecting this literature for review, I allow for an analysis which begins (in section 2.2) by examining discursive-rhetorical devices employed in the construction of accounts, defending or explaining aspects of AVR in institutional written materials analysed in chapter 4, and caseworkers' research interviews, in chapters 5 and 6. By reviewing literature examining identity and positioning (in section 2.3), I am able to explore how caseworkers employ these discursive-rhetorical devices (introduced in 2.2) with other positioning strategies to orient to perceived institutional ideologies and motivations. Lastly by reviewing literature on multilingualism, literacies and linguistic repertoires in section 2.4, I allow for an analysis of how caseworkers negotiate – using rhetorical-discursive devices introduced in section 2.2 – the provision of AVR information to clients in this, often, multilingual gatekeeping encounter.

Section 2.2 begins by addressing accounts literature, framing both institutional written materials and caseworkers as doing ‘accounting’ work (as introduced in section 1.6).

2.2 Accounting for AVR: Rhetorical Discourse Analysis, incorporating Social Actor Analysis

The Rhetorical Discourse Analysis (RDA) (Arribas-Ayllon, Sarangi and Clarke 2011a) framework is employed (together with other concepts and frameworks) in this thesis in chapters 4, 5 and 6, examining how AVR programmes and practice are *accounted* for through two different data sets: institutional written texts (chapter 4), and research interviews with caseworkers (chapters 5 and 6). Therefore in this present section, the RDA framework is discussed in terms of its application to both written texts and caseworkers’ talk.

Literature on accounts provides an array of definitions for the function of accounts. Although accounts have been defined as ordinary explanations about everyday activities (Antaki 1988:1) and, as Billig (1991) argues, we should acknowledge that rhetoric is present in all social activity, it is Buttny’s (1993) definition that seems most appropriate in reflecting the function of text and talk around AVR, and therefore the definition which is used in this study. Buttny reviews various definitions and uses of the term ‘accounting’, however he focuses on investigating accounting in its function as “the use of language to interactionally construct preferred meanings for problematic events” (Buttny 1993:21). This echoes Scott and Lyman’s earlier definition of accounting as “a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to evaluative enquiry”, and as a “statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behaviour” (Scott and Lyman 1968:46).

IOM and Refugee Action can be regarded as doing ‘*accounting work*’ (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a) via their institutional AVR written material (see appendices 1-2), justifying AVR when faced with strong criticism (Black and Gent 2004:7) and a lack of trust (as discussed in section 1.4 of the introduction). The AVR literature provides the

institutions with an opportunity for them to – using Buttny’s (1993) definition – publicly construct their preferred meaning for the AVR programmes, and the process of returning ‘home’ under AVR. Discussing high stakes situations, much like the client-institution relationship studied here, Sarangi argues that “[m]otivated institutional practices may privilege a particular representation over another” (2009:482). Given the controversies around AVR, conducting an analysis of accounting practice within the texts, which may contribute to an understanding of representational power, is appropriate.

In proposing that these institutions are ‘accounting’ for return, in chapter 4, I examine how discursive devices contribute to institutional arguments justifying (their involvement in) AVR. To identify arguments accounting for AVR within institutional texts, making visible “politically and ideologically salient features” (Jaworski and Coupland 2009:474), this study follows Arribas-Ayllon *et al.*’s (2011a) Rhetorical Discourse Analysis (RDA) framework, combining it with van Leeuwen’s (1996) Social Actor Analysis framework, discussed further below.

In my research interviews, caseworkers can also be regarded as providing accounts. As Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* argue, “...accounts are part of the restorative function of ‘aligning’ actions or ‘repairing’ interactions to maintain the social order” (2011a:58). Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* justify their focus on accounts by drawing attention to the “extraordinary range of everyday activities they cover, whether it is mending interaction, saving face, or constructing persuasive arguments” (2011a:57). In applying RDA to caseworkers’ research interview data in chapters 5 and 6, I examine how accounts of their work practice are constructed with rhetorical-discursive devices. I consider the interview data to be accounting in a different way to the institutional texts. As Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* argue:

“[p]eople ‘account’ for themselves when they want others to recognise and understand what they are doing. In this wide sense of the term accounts are conceived as sense-making practices. But they can also be understood as forms of repair when commonsense or normative rules are disrupted...” (2011a:62).

Thus in chapters 5 and 6, I investigate how caseworkers use rhetorical devices to position their professional selves relative to institutional agendas and ideologies.

Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* state that accounts are “intrinsically rhetorical” (2011a:58). As such, an analysis of rhetorical devices within a text allows for an understanding of how accounting work is achieved. Rhetorical Discourse Analysis (RDA) is derived by Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* (2011a), from Roberts and Sarangi’s (2005:632) theme-oriented discourse analysis approach, which explores how discourse constructs professional practice through an analysis of texts and ethnographic knowledge gained from observation and interviews. ‘Theme-oriented’ refers to both *analytic* themes such as the thematic use of rhetorical devices (e.g. constructed dialogue), and *focal* themes addressed in the analysis (such as *decision-making*).

Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* (2011a:65) name three ‘pillars’ or macro devices of RDA – *categorisation*, *modalisation* and *intertextuality/interdiscursivity*. These pillars encompass various other rhetorical devices (which they refer to as ‘building blocks’) within. The authors state these devices, or ‘analytic themes’, may include “frames and footing, contextualisation cues and inferences, face and facework, and other linguistic features such as contrast, constructed dialogue, repetition, lists, metaphor, pronoun, analogy, extreme case formulation, character and event work, etc” (2011a:70). After briefly introducing each macro device, within each one I examine the potential of the following *selected* micro-rhetorical devices in the institutional written documents and research interviews, as appropriate:

- Categorisation: event work, character work
- Modalisation: extreme case formulation
- Intertextuality: constructed dialogue, pronominal reference.

I consider the ‘character work’ device alongside the following other devices contributing to the representation of social actors, as proposed by van Leeuwen (1996:32): exclusion, active/passive role allocation, aggregation and association.

The above devices have been selected from the two frameworks for their relevance to the institutional written materials analysed in chapter 4, and the research interviews analysed in chapter 5 and 6. In reviewing literature on these rhetorical devices, we may understand how these devices can be used strategically to a) justify (account for)

AVR within institutional texts, and b) construct accounts of the experience of providing AVR in the caseworkers research interviews.

2.2.1 Categorisation

Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* describe categorisation as a “fundamental activity of human thought” (2011a:65), which therefore represents a powerful method of describing the world. Within this macro category I review three devices (event work, character work, contrast) which I also consider to be umbrella categories for tools to categorise social actors and activities.

Event work

A rhetorical device outlined by Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* (2011a) in the categorisation ‘pillar’ is *event work*. The manner in which an event is described is rhetorically powerful, and is examined in chapter 4 in regard to the manner in which the ‘event’ of returning is constructed in the *Stories of Return* narratives.

Both Labov (2009) and Edwards (2009) acknowledge the transformative power of narratives on a reported experience. Where or when an event or story starts, as Riessman suggests, can “profoundly alter its shape and meaning” (1993:18), and therefore is a powerful way to manage causality, an important aspect when considering agency. For example, whether the IOM *Stories of Return* booklet begins the narrative at the client’s decision to migrate to the UK, at a description of their experience in the UK, at their negative asylum decision and so on, can significantly affect the audience’s interpretation of the wider narrative of return. This type of ‘event work’ may impact on whether AVR is represented as ‘voluntary’, ‘normal’ or a ‘desired’ outcome for a client.

Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) framework for analysing narratives provides a useful tool in categorising constituent elements. Although I recognise the limitations of presuming a set structure exists within a narrative, as raised by Edwards (2009) in his critique of the seemingly prescriptive nature of Labov and Waletzky’s framework, I draw on the notion of a ‘complicating action’ element within narratives. The ‘complicating

action' element proposed in the framework responds to the question "then what happened?" (Labov 2009:224). This is a useful concept in understanding the types of problems or 'complications' which are represented in the *Stories of Return*, and how they differ between the institutions. This relates to the concept of figure-ground, which Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* describe as a "useful apparatus for understanding how participants foreground characters and events to justify claims of responsibility while positioning themselves as acting appropriately within a socio-moral order" (2011a:67). In relation to the *Stories of Return*, it is useful to examine which 'complicating actions' of return are foregrounded by the institution, and which are backgrounded in these entextualisations (discussed below) of the clients' experiences.

In discussing strategies of legitimising immigration control, van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999:96) also address the way in which events are described. They argue that when a social practice is recontextualised, elements of the social practice will be altered, as not all aspects can be included. They argue that *deletion, rearrangement, substitution* and *addition* may all occur. As Eisenhart asks: "[i]n what ways is the creation of this event-as-text an imposition of organization, order, structure, or logic onto the event?" (2008:61).

Edwards (1994) discusses *script formulation* as a type of *event work* which he states is a manner of generalising, or using contrasts, to normalise or abnormalise events (1994:217). Similarly, a study by Hall, Sarangi and Slembrouck (1997) found that the strategy of categorising events in terms of the best interests of the child is common in social work in order to justify the institutional decision. Script formulations then are powerful in their ability to formulate actions as typical or exceptional.

It is evident that how an event is described, what is omitted, whether events are rearranged, elements substituted or aspects added, where the story begins and what is foregrounded as a complicating action within the narrative, all contribute to how the event is categorised.

Character work

A further type of categorisation device is character work, described as a “pervasive aspect of professional description” (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a:15). It is therefore an essential device to examine within the context of AVR, particularly considering the importance of individual agency (Ahearn 2001) to the credibility of the programmes.

By categorising people into membership groups (e.g. families, asylum seekers, mothers) they are associated with, as Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* state, “attributes, obligations, and activities” (2011a:65). Crucially, this type of character work can encourage certain readings of the text and interpretations about a person’s (actor’s) actions within the text. Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* provide the example of institutional clients often being presented as self-standing and autonomous, allowing for any problems arising later to be attributable to the client, rather than the institutional representative. Parallels can be drawn immediately with the context of AVR, with the discussion around the voluntariness of AVR programmes, and hence the associated responsibility of return.

Similarly van Leeuwen (1996), in his Social Actor Analysis framework, also explores categorisation and what Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* refer to as character work, by examining how social actors are represented in discourse with a detailed investigation of particular ‘representational choices’ that authors make. Van Leeuwen (1996:52) ties these to specific rhetorical realisations. He demonstrates how representations of social actors are managed by these representational choices which include *exclusion, active/passive role allocation, genericisation/specification, aggregation and association* (1996:66). Analysing what representational choices have been made provides an understanding of how social actors (such as the people who have returned ‘home’ in the *Stories of Return*) are categorised and evaluated in AVR information materials, what power they are allocated, and therefore what type of argument for AVR the institutions may be making. For example, it is valuable to consider: to what extent the UK government’s involvement is excluded in representations of the AVR process; whether clients, caseworkers and institutions are represented as active or passive; when and how clients are represented as statistics (aggregation) or as individuals; whether social actors are associated with others (e.g. other categories of people migrating, officials or institutions); whether some

actors in the AVR process are *personalised* (allocating them responsibility) or *impersonalised* and *indetermined*, effectively anonymising them and rendering their identity as not relevant or intentionally obscured. Goodman, for example, considers the dichotomy of asylum seekers categorised in the UK press as ‘bogus’ or ‘genuine’, with ‘bogus’ asylum seekers being regarded as legitimate targets for tough immigration policies. He argues, however, that “this separation allows for the harsh treatment of *all* asylum seekers as the assumption becomes that all asylum seekers are potentially bogus” (2008:111). The categorisation of people into these different groups is therefore a powerful rhetorical device in allocating power to social actors in texts.

The following section discusses the second pillar of RDA, modalisation.

2.2.2 Modalisation

Modalisation – the second of Arribas-Ayllon *et al.*’s (2011a) pillars of RDA to be addressed – refers to what the authors of a text commit themselves to in terms of truth (Fairclough 2003), and therefore it is important in understanding the authors’ or speakers’ degrees of certainty regarding – and commitment to – knowledge, and the construction of facts. In this sense and in the context of AVR, it is useful in examining a social actor’s commitment to their utterance. For example, analysing modalisation devices in research interviews may contribute to an understanding of caseworkers’ alignment with institutional ideological agendas or perceived responsibilities or work practices, in chapter 5. Similarly, examining modalisation in institutional written materials assists in understanding how the institutions represent clients’ experiences and successes through the institutionally produced return narratives (in chapter 4).

Modality can include any linguistic device which acts as a vehicle for expressing the speaker’s personal opinion or orientations to what they say (Fairclough, 1992, 2003). As such, modalisation can be analysed via an array of different devices, including modal verbs (*can, will, may, must, would* etc.), subjectively marked modalities (e.g. ‘she *acknowledges* that return was more difficult than expected’), evaluative statements, hedges, adjectives and extreme case formulation. Extreme case formulations are a way of legitimising claims by making hyperbolic points about an issue, for example by using

phrases such as ‘every time’ and ‘completely innocent’ (Pomerantz 1986:219). In her key paper examining how extreme case formulations are involved in accusing, justifying and defending, Pomerantz describes three potential uses, summarised as:

- “(1) to assert the strongest case in anticipation of non-sympathetic hearings,
- (2) to propose the cause of a phenomenon,
- (3) to speak for the rightness (wrongness) of a practice” (1986:227)

Pomerantz argues that “Extreme Case formulations (‘all the time,’ ‘everybody,’ ‘no one’) propose behavio[u]rs are acceptable and right or unacceptable and wrong.” (1986:228); identifying these in AVR literature (and caseworker interviews) will contribute to an understanding of how AVR is justified. I will now discuss the final pillar of RDA, intertextuality.

2.2.3 Intertextuality

The last ‘pillar’ of RDA is *intertextuality/interdiscursivity*, examining the dialogical and polyvocal characteristic of texts, following Bakhtin (1981) who proposes that texts are responding to, or anticipating a response from, other texts. This pillar incorporates Fairclough’s (1992:117) *manifest intertextuality*, where other texts are clearly marked in a text, e.g. with quotation marks. Fairclough distinguishes this from what he terms *interdiscursivity* or *constitutive intertextuality* (1992:85) which he uses to describe when other texts are included *implicitly*. Given the focus of AVR literature on clients’ *Stories of Return*, ostensibly representing what clients have reported upon return, it is *manifest intertextuality* in the form of *constructed dialogue* which is of primary concern in chapter 4. The function of constructed dialogue, however, is also examined in chapter 5 with regard to how caseworkers utilise it when orienting to perceived institutional agendas and ideologies.

Constructed dialogue

Bucholtz describes entextualisation as “a process whereby language becomes detachable from its original context of production” (2009:505). Constructed dialogue can be regarded therefore as a type of entextualisation, that is, when clients’ discourse is detached from its original context and introduced into a new one. For example, clients’ discourse in reporting their experiences of return to the institution, or in talking to caseworkers, is entextualised into the institutional written material, or the research interview. Sarangi argues, regarding entextualisation processes, that “[l]anguage is a key representational tool but representations are always mediated via agents and cannot be devoid of ideological traces, especially in the institutional context” (2009:481).

Thus as Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* (2011a) argue, intertextuality is a powerful rhetorical device particularly when discussing problematic events, as it enables the speaker/author to bolster their credibility by recruiting other voices to support their own position. In exploring how institutions and staff construct accounts, this study examines *constructed dialogue* – a type of *manifest intertextuality*. This is a term Tannen (1989) uses to describe what is commonly referred to as reported speech. Tannen argues that the conventional means of denoting reported speech as direct or indirect are not sufficient, as what amounts to reported speech “is primarily the creation of the speaker rather than the party quoted” (1989:99). She includes within constructed dialogue: imagined, hypothetical and unspoken speech. Following Tannen, by using the term ‘constructed’ this study hopes to foreground that although the speech may be within quotation marks, it is still ‘constructed’. Yet of course it is still valuable to observe whether the constructed dialogue is represented by the author/s as direct, or indirect. Ravotas and Berkenkotter (1998:220) distinguish six different ways in which clients’ reported speech was included in their data – psychotherapists’ notes and assessments. The following categories have been selected from Ravotas and Berkenkotter’s (1998:220) six categories as useful in the classification of constructed dialogue in my data:

1. Framed direct quote: He said, “I was happy to be back”
2. Framed indirect quote: He reported he was happy to be back.
3. Propositional attitude frames: He believed it was best to be back.

4. Unframed nonexplicit description: His father reportedly wanted him back.

In identifying these fine-grained categories, analysis shows how the institution or caseworker commits to the content of the constructed dialogue, and employs constructed dialogue to account for AVR. In this way, we can see how Arribas-Ayllon *et al.*'s three pillars at times overlap, with it possible to consider some devices within two different pillars. The *framed indirect quote* device (no.2. above) for example can be considered in terms of its rhetorical power as constructed dialogue, but also in terms of its modalisation in distancing the author from the represented social actor's speech. In this way, the pillars are considered more as guiding categories, rather than static macro devices.

Constructed dialogue is rhetorically employed in the positioning of the reporting (or, constructing) author, and to render a particular reading of an event. Buttny for example, found that in an analysis of reported speech and talk about race, "in each and every case of reported speech we find an assessment of some sort" (1997:501). He finds that "reporting speech can serve various functions; to dramatize a point, to give evidence for a position..." (1997:478). An examination of how constructed speech is employed here will assist in understanding how accounts are constructed, and to what end. Sung-Yul Park and Bucholtz argue that a focus on "entextualisation as a central mechanism for the authorization and legitimation of institutions opens the door to detailed inquiries regarding the construction of institutional authority" (2009:487). They describe recent research into entextualisation as arguing that "institutionally sponsored entextualisation does not simply inscribe talk but more fundamentally inscribes and reinscribes relations of power" (2009:493). This underscores the importance of examining constructed dialogue in institutional settings.

The analysis of the rhetorical power of constructed dialogue is useful in examining both AVR literature and research interviews, providing an understanding of how it may be employed to account for AVR.

Pronominal reference

The use of personal pronouns (e.g., 'I', 'you', 'we', 'they'), are also a key aspect of intertextuality in which "self-other relations are represented" (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a:76). In their research within geriatric clinics for example, Coupland and Coupland established that the choice of pronouns were a way to "mark relational frames" (2000:209). De Fina, Shiffrin and Bamberg consider pronouns to be a key linguistic strategy for "projecting and constructing particular personas" (2006:8). Pronominal reference therefore has a powerful rhetorical function. An analysis of personal pronouns then is useful in revealing how institutions and caseworkers display power and solidarity regarding the provision of AVR programmes, for example in how caseworkers align with or distance themselves from clients and institutions.

In this section I have demonstrated that the controversial or problematic aspects of AVR may be oriented to by the institutions through account work. I have discussed how these orientations may be identified and investigated with an analysis of rhetorical devices used to account for and justify AVR in institutional written material. I have also considered how analysis of rhetorical devices can also contribute to an understanding of how caseworkers construct accounts of their experiences of AVR in research interviews.

In the following sub-section of this chapter, I review literature on identity and positioning theory, employed in the analysis of caseworkers' positioning relative to institutional ideologies and agendas. It introduces further positioning strategies, which are combined with the rhetorical devices discussed above, in constructing professional identities in the research interviews.

2.3 Identities, positioning and interpretative repertoires

2.3.1 Identities

This section reviews the analytic concept of *positioning* – and in particular *interpretative repertoires* – employed in the analysis of caseworker research interviews in chapter 5. This section is complemented by the literature review in section 2.2 on the micro

rhetorical-discursive devices, introduced as devices to examine in the analysis of caseworkers' positioning relative to institutional ideologies in research interviews.

Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) cross-disciplinary framework for the analysis of identity is used as a starting point in this exploration of caseworkers' professional identity construction through positioning. This research as such takes a social-constructionist approach to identity, viewing identity as "something that is constituted through social action and especially through language" (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:588). Following De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg, this research relies on the assumption that:

"...identity is a process that (1) takes place in concrete and specific interactional occasions, (2) yields constellations of identities instead of individual, monolithic constructs, (3) does not simply emanate from the individual, but results from processes of negotiation and entextualisation (Bauman & Briggs, 1990) that are eminently social, and (4) entails "discursive work" (Weider & Zimmerman, 1970)." (2006:2).

Bucholtz and Hall (2005:592) propose that identity encompasses: macro level demographic categories, local ethnographically specific cultural positions, and lastly – the focus of chapter 5 – temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles. Their analytic framework puts *interaction* at the centre of understanding identity, arguing that identity is "an intersubjectively achieved social and cultural phenomenon" (2005:607). As De Fina *et al.* argue, "[t]hus identities are seen not as merely represented in discourse, but rather as performed, enacted and embodied through a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic means" (2006:3), building on Butler's (1990) notion of identity as performance.

In their examination of social and discursive dimensions of identity in social work, Hall, Sarangi, and Slembrouck, examine how "speakers construct layers of identities in ongoing sequences of talk, one version of the professional or client being superimposed on top of others to create complex, negotiated formulations of who people are as well as the kind of behaviour that is expected of them." (1999b:296). Similarly, chapter 5 analyses IOM and Refugee Action caseworkers' positioning of selves and others, interactionally producing layers of professional (as an aspect of their social) identities in these ethnographic interviews. This is valuable in demonstrating how caseworkers discursively

negotiate institutional ideologies and power relations, while mediating the relationship between the Home Office, institution and the client.

The following section introduces the concept of interactionally-produced positioning, and how analysis of it may be usefully employed in understanding caseworkers' orientations to institutional ideologies regarding AVR.

2.3.2 Positioning

Bucholtz and Hall define identity as “the social positioning of self and other” (2005:586), establishing the relationship between positioning and identity. De Fina *et al.* state one of the goals of positioning theory is to “more clearly identify the mechanisms through which linguistic and social processes become reified as observable products that may be glossed by others as “identities”” (2006:7).

In their influential paper, Davies and Harré define positioning as “the discursive production of a diversity of selves” (1990:47), reflecting a fluid, temporal and multiple idea of identity. They specify that *reflexive* positioning occurs when someone positions themselves, while *interactive* positioning occurs when someone positions another. De Fina argues that the focus on positioning within identity research has allowed an understanding of how identity is constructed “in negotiation with other participants” (2013:42). She foregrounds the more nuanced and dynamic interpretation of positioning as “a reciprocal and dialogical process so that individuals not only take but also are attributed positions and negotiate them in emergent ways” (2013:41). In this way she moves away from Davies and Harré’s earlier concept.

The concept of positioning is further divided into three levels by Bamberg (1997). Briefly, Bamberg (1997) applies positioning to the analysis of storytelling. Within this context, he proposes that positioning occurs at the following levels: how the characters are positioned in relation to one another within the narrative (level 1); how the speaker positions themselves to the audience (level 2); how the speaker positions themselves to themselves (level 3) (1997:337). Although inherently linked – as how one positions another contributes to how one positions oneself (Schrauf 2000) – chapter 5 in the main

focuses on reflexive positioning. This analysis examines level 3 positioning in terms of “relationships to the dominant ideologies, widespread social practices and underlying power structures” (De Fina *et al.* 2006:7). As De Fina argues, via level 3 positioning,

“positioning analysis also offers a middle ground between approaches to identity that keep a very narrow focus on the here and now of interactions (such as CA influenced studies) and orientations that focus much more on wide social processes such as the circulation of ideologies and the exercise of control over social and cultural roles, than they do on local interaction and therefore emphasize being positioned over positioning (such as CDA)” (2013:43).

In relation to my study, an analysis of (level 3) positioning in caseworkers’ research interviews, focuses on the rhetorical-discursive devices (as discussed above in section 2.2) and other discourse strategies, particularly *interpretative repertoires* (discussed below), which allow caseworkers to position themselves relative to perceived institutional ideologies and agendas. This positioning can be regarded as contributing to the construction of fluid, dynamic and negotiated social and professional identities.

Bucholtz and Hall argue that the resources or devices that produce identity “are broad and flexible” (2005:608). They argue identity can be produced via a number of linguistic devices, including categories, implicature and presupposition, evaluative, affective and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk (2005:594). However, De Fina argues that “positioning theorists...have started opening up their horizons and investigating different aspects of identity construction within interviews as they began to pay attention to the embedding of narratives in contexts” (2013:42). Schrauf (2000) for example looks at how narratives are employed in addressing threats to social identity. Given the often controversial nature of AVR – the reported “dirty work” (Dick 2005) – an analysis of the contribution of caseworkers’ narratives to positioning, and accounting (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a) for AVR, is examined in chapter 5. The analysis also draws upon the strategic use of constructed dialogue (Tannen 1989), amongst other rhetorical-discursive devices (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a) discussed in section 2.2 of this literature review.

The following section introduces the concept of *interpretative repertoires* as a further means of positioning oneself, and as doing accounting work. In chapter 5, I employ

the concept of *interpretative repertoires* (Wetherell and Potter 1988:178) to understand how caseworkers position themselves relative to institutional ideologies within the administration of AVR, accounting for aspects of their work, and contributing to their professional identities.

2.3.3 Interpretative repertoires

Following Abell and Myer's discussion on the tensions and sometimes contradictions in people's talk as they "orient to the ever-changing local context of the interaction" (2008:153), themes within the caseworkers' interview data will be discussed in terms of *interpretative repertoires* (Wetherell and Potter 1988:178). This acknowledges the impermanence and multiplicity of caseworkers' positions, as Wetherell and Potter argue: "[s]peakers give shifting, inconsistent and varied pictures of their social worlds" (1988:170). They elaborate:

"Repertoires can be seen as the building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena. Any particular repertoire is constituted out of a restricted range of terms used in a specific stylistic and grammatical fashion. Commonly these terms are derived from one or more key metaphors and the presence of a repertoire will often be signalled by certain tropes or figures of speech." (1988:170)

The concept of interpretative repertoires originated in critical discursive psychology, and began with Gilbert and Mulkey's (1984) influential study on the construction of scientific knowledge in which language and discourse was put "centre stage" (Edley 2001:190). Gilbert and Mulkey's study found that in research interviews, scientists used two different ways of talking about and accounting for scientific activity. In what they termed the 'empiricist repertoire', researchers had a neutral style in which scientists were represented as influenced only by, as Potter and Wetherell describe, "the demands of natural phenomena or the constraints of invariant rules" (2010:149). This was contrasted with the 'contingent repertoire', in which scientists' actions were represented as influenced by "factors outside the realm of physical phenomena" (2010:150). Gilbert and Mulkey found that the combined use of these two repertoires allowed scientists to

account for mistakes in scientific work as being influenced by social factors, while the empiricist repertoire was employed “to maintain a coherent version of their social world which featured their own beliefs as the unthreatened truth” (Potter and Wetherell 2010:153). In this way, these repertoires were employed as ready-made arguments, and used as a short-hand for interactionally-constructed positions.

Antaki describes interpretative repertoires as “a constellation of terms, phrases, references, metaphors and allusions that all act together” (1994:127). In his research analysing the construction of masculinity, Edley foregrounds the intertextuality of repertoires, as “like the pre-figured steps that can be flexibly and creatively strung together in the improvisation of a dance” (2001:198). Potter and Wetherell developed Gilbert and Mulkay’s (1984) notion of an interpretative repertoire, describing it as “basically a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events.” (2010:138). Edley notes that although they are doing similar things to discourses, they are distinguished from each other in that interpretative repertoires are regarded as “less monolithic”, as “much smaller and more fragmented, offering speakers a whole range of different rhetorical opportunities” (2001:201), while discourses are viewed more as institutionally-wide.

Like the broader umbrella concept of positioning, the concept of interpretative repertoires goes some way towards bridging the theoretical gap between approaches in which the individual has the agency (such as Conversation Analysis), and more critical approaches such as CDA, where the agency is considered to be within larger structures such as institutions. In this sense, interpretative repertoires can be regarded as resources for individuals to make use of, rather than structurally imposed positions. In this sense, this approach is highly appropriate for investigating how caseworkers individually use interpretative repertoires to orient to the larger, structural ideologies within AVR. Edley suggests that interpretative repertoires may be difficult for the researcher to identify, but that “[g]radually, one comes to recognize patterns across different people’s talk, particular images, metaphors or figures of speech” (2001:199). However, Abell and Myers add that the analyst identifies repertoires “not by grammatical structures or content words but by their place in the interaction and the function they perform” (2010:148). Potter and Wetherell, acknowledging that interpretative repertoires may be difficult to

identify, suggest that a method of checking “whether analytic discoveries have reality for the participants is to see whether they themselves orientate to them” (2010:153). They argue that further to identifying these different patterns of language use, we must understand their functions and “the problems thrown up by their existence.” (2010:149).

Potter and Wetherell consider interpretative repertoires as being “used to perform different sorts of accounting tasks” (2010:156). As such, in analysing the use of interpretative repertoires in research interviews with caseworkers, we can gain insight into how caseworkers draw on different repertoires to account for AVR.

Having reviewed interpretative repertoires we can understand how they are used as a type of short-cut to position selves towards social events. The final sub-section of this literature review addresses research on multilingualism, linguistic repertoires and literacies in gatekeeping encounters, employed in the analysis in chapter 6 in order to examine how caseworkers negotiate multilingualism and superdiversity.

2.4 Multilingualism, linguistic repertoires, and literacies in gatekeeping encounters

This section reviews key theoretical and analytic concepts applied in chapter 6, the final analysis chapter. By considering the caseworker-client relationship as a gatekeeping encounter (as discussed in section 1.3.2), my analysis explores how talk and text around this encounter may shape clients’ discursive environment, and affect their potential to access elements of the AVR programmes, as well as opportunities to access AVR information (epistemic access). The concepts of multilingualism, linguistic repertoire, literacy and translinguaging offer tools to gain an in-depth understanding of how caseworkers may negotiate the complexities of this already asymmetric relationship, and the challenges they may face in providing written AVR information for superdiverse (Vertovec 2007, addressed in section 2.4.2) clients in this gatekeeping encounter.

2.4.1 Macro and micro multilingualism in service-encounter settings

An analysis of how caseworkers negotiate and position themselves with regard to clients' linguistic resources and practices, as well as to the institutional management of linguistic diversity, reveals presuppositions and conceptions about language within institutional approaches to multilingualism. This research takes an ecological approach to examining multilingualism following Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck's definition of the term:

“multilingualism is not what individuals have and don't have, but what the environment, as structured determinations and interactional emergence, enables and disables” (2005:197)

By exploring the AVR context and focusing on the *environment* or *space* in which AVR communication takes place, I intentionally move away from a focus on individuals as lacking the capacity to communicate or interact due to their perceived linguistic competence. Instead I consider the environment in which AVR applicants find themselves as shaping their capacity, and I consider the environment to be something which is negotiated by caseworkers. As Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck state:

“[a] lack of competence to communicate adequately is here not seen as a problem *of* the speaker, but as a problem *for* the speaker, lodged not in individual forms of deficit or inability but in the connection between individual communicative potential and requirements produced by the environment” (2005:198).

Through their approaches to multilingualism, IOM and Refugee Action can be regarded as forming environments which may assist or limit clients' capacity to access AVR information. Moyer adopts this perspective in her analysis of multilingualism in institutional settings, defining multilingualism in her study as “a form of (institutional) agency or as intended or planned actions with the goal of improving intercultural communication” (2011:1209). As such, an analysis of institutional multilingualism, as negotiated via caseworkers, provides an understanding of AVR clients' capacity for epistemic access.

In chapter 6, decisions regarding multilingualism that come from management, or which are made regarding the publication of AVR materials/texts and their existence or

availability, are regarded as ‘planned actions’. These shall be referred to as ‘top-down multilingualism’, to differentiate them from individual caseworker responses and decisions represented in the interviews. Distinguishing caseworker and top-down institutional approaches, however, is not simple, as Codó and Pérez-Milans acknowledge in their focus “on the ways in which multilingual communicative practices, institutional logics and wide processes of social change are interwoven in the production of everyday life in contemporary institutions” (2014:381). In this sense, what caseworkers do in their working day and how they negotiate top-down multilingualism *becomes* the institutional approach – the interactional and institutional orders being mutually constituted (Codó and Pérez-Milans 2014:382).

2.4.2 Superdiversity

By considering clients as *superdiverse* (Vertovec 2007), we are able to gain insight into the various demands made of the institutions. Vertovec argues that British society should now be treated as *superdiverse* in that recent immigration patterns (termed ‘new migration’, Vertovec 2007) have resulted in small numbers of people coming to Britain from many different countries, differing from migration patterns during the 1960s and 1970s where larger groups of migrants came from just one or two countries (Vertovec 2007). AVR caseworkers mentioned working with people from 58 countries in my research interviews; ethnographic observations shows that they deal with clients from more, indicating that their clients will have diverse *linguistic repertoires* (discussed in section 2.4.4 below) and sociocultural knowledge.

Not only this, as Vertovec suggests, people migrating to the UK can also be considered *superdiverse* due to the variety of *channels* of migration, as well as the number of legal statuses which result from these channels. If we consider applicants to AVR programmes in general: applicants may be people who have over-stayed their visas who are now deemed as irregular migrants because they are in the UK without immigration documentation; they could be asylum seekers who have claimed protection from persecution; or, less commonly, they could be victims of trafficking. Applicants may also of course be considered by the state as irregular migrants upon arrival, but become

asylum seekers once here (highlighting the problem with labels). If we consider applicants to the VARRP programme alone, they could be asylum seekers at any stage of the asylum process and therefore have one of many different immigration statuses, resulting in different access to benefits and opportunities; they could have just arrived in the UK or they could have been here for many years, and have raised families here.

Acknowledging the superdiversity of AVR clients recognises the challenges that institutions and staff face in addressing clients' linguistic needs in this gatekeeping scenario. These are needs which we will see caseworkers orienting to in the analysis in chapter 6, and which, as Phillimore argues, "welfare providers are struggling to understand and meet" (Phillimore 2015:569). Codó and Garrido stress that this is a challenge which a wide variety of professions are encountering: "[c]ivil servants, doctors, teachers, social workers and all sorts of service providers face new communicative challenges in their daily professional practice" due to the changing "face and voice of their clientele" (2010:297). IOM and Refugee Action are therefore not alone in facing these challenges. As Angouri states, "the need for handling multilingualism becomes an increasingly important issue for groups of professionals (e.g. in health care or social welfare contexts) who need to interact *with* and provide services *to* individuals with whom they do not share the same L1 or even any common language" (2014:4). As Ladegaard and Jenks argue, "[m]ore often than not, workplace practices are carried out in a second or third language and with people who not only have different cultural values and norms but also little knowledge of, and specific training to deal with, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity" (2015:1). I will use the term 'superdiverse' to acknowledge the diversification of diversity among AVR clients (and staff).

2.4.3 Multilingualism in institutional encounters

In examining what multilingualism consists of, how caseworkers negotiate it, and how it may impact on clients' ability to access services, this research follows others exploring how multilingualism is accommodated in institutional encounters (e.g. Blackledge and Creese, 2010; Codó and Garrido 2010; Jansson 2014; Maryns 2006; Moyer 2011). In her review of studies on multilingualism in the workplace, Angouri argues that "[t]he ways in

which the co-existence of multiple languages is managed at the micro level by the interactants and at the macro level by the company often reveal contradictory ‘realities’ that show a conflicting top-down and bottom-up understanding of language practice” (2014:2).

Indeed in Moyer’s study of multilingual practices in a health clinic in Spain, she argues that multilingual practice is “the product of misconceived ideas about language, and categorizations about migrant clients as well as hierarchical management schemes” (2011:1212). She reveals “a contradiction where institutional goals and actions which guide multilingual practices [at the clinic] do not address in a practical way the communication needs of social actors”, arguing that “top-down forms of decision making go unquestioned” (2011:1210).

Similarly, in their study examining the role of language in institutional and public service contexts, Codó and Garrido conclude that staff members from two ideologically distinct institutions (a government office and a free legal advice service) had very little awareness of (and barely oriented to) the linguistic needs of their superdiverse client base, with staff taking a standpoint “which is not inclusive but exclusive” (2010:327).

Blommaert argues that part of linguistic inequality (and hence social inequality), as found in the above studies, “depends on the inability of speakers accurately to perform certain discourse functions on the basis of available and accessible resources” (Blommaert 2005:71). My study takes as a starting point Blommaert’s summary of ‘voice’ – “the way in which people manage to make themselves understood or fail to do so” (2005:4). Blommaert shows that “an analysis of voice is an analysis of power effects” (2005:5), arguing that whenever there is a difference in access, there will be inequality – one interactant will have a reduced ability to make themselves understood. Maryns and Blommaert regard linguistic inequality in terms of *pretextuality* – that is “preconditions for communication that influence communicative behaviour” (2002:12). They argue that *pre-textual gaps* occur when participants in an interaction have different preconditions. Building on Gumperz’s work on sociocultural assumptions and conversational inferencing, Blommaert (2005:76) asserts that two problems (of pretextuality) often occur which can affect someone’s voice: a differential access to forms or linguistic resources (e.g. a specific language variety, code, jargon, style or genre), and a differential access to contextual spaces (resulting in sociocultural knowledge). Focusing on the issues of globalisation and

closely analysing writing systems in different contexts, Blommaert shows how some linguistic and contextual resources have “restricted mobility” (2005:95) and demonstrates how linguistic resources (such as knowledge of English language or of bureaucratic procedures) may function in one context, but not another. He considers the ramifications of this in high-stakes gatekeeping encounters such as asylum interviews.

This issue of voice and these two broad resources (linguistic and contextual) appear central in understanding how the provision of AVR information and programmes may be managed in gatekeeping encounters, where language and mobility are key factors. Access to these resources can of course affect not only participants’ voice, as Blommaert discusses, but also their ability to comprehend their interactants, in both written and oral modalities.

For example, in her linguistic ethnography of the Belgian immigration system Maryns (2006) found that there was an institutional unwillingness to accommodate linguistic diversity and language variation, through the choice of language employed in the asylum interviews. Although the Belgian immigration department officially offers asylum seekers the choice of language they want to conduct their asylum application in, she found that in practice there are “serious constraints on language choice” (2006:200). She notes that these decisions are often based on language-ideologies: for example, she found that only monolingual standard varieties were considered appropriate for interaction in the asylum process.

Linguistic inequality was also evident in Moyer’s (2011) analysis of Spanish public sector multilingualism in a healthcare setting. She finds that there is a clear hierarchy of languages depending on how and what languages are used by staff (in interactions), and to what extent institutional documents are provided in that language. In Moyer’s setting, clients are categorised in terms of their country-of-origin and therefore assigned as speakers of nation-state languages, “thus ignoring the internal linguistic minorities of nation-states who are among the migrants who visit the clinic” (2011:1211), arguing that access to semiotic resources is restricted by the institution as a result. The idea of a hierarchy of languages relates to Blommaert’s use of ‘voice’ in that this capacity, this ‘voice’, is “often associated with the most prestigious linguistic resources ... and very often

denied to resources ranking lower on the scales of value”, such as “minority languages, ‘unwritten’ languages, dialects” (2005:69).

Clients’ voice and comprehension can also be limited by institutional representatives’ refusal to provide information in another modality (e.g. the written mode). Conducting a linguistic ethnography in a state immigration department in Spain, Codó (2008a) found that the institution refused to accept written requests from clients for information about their applications. Similarly, officials refused to write down their verbal answers, even when clients explicitly asked them to do so for comprehension reasons. Codó argues this reflects the institutional representatives’ “general disregard for their interlocutors’ difficulties in comprehension” (2008:66). In Codó’s view, this problematises clients’ linguistic competences, emphasising how written information could aid comprehension and was valued by clients because they “would be able to draw on the expertise of friends or relatives to make sense of the information they had been furnished” (2008a:73). The importance of such social networks on people’s ability to understand bureaucratic information and plan and make decisions has been highlighted before (Rock 2007). Codó argues that this refusal to communicate with clients in written form results in clients who are not competent Spanish speakers being “structurally disadvantaged” (2008a:74), and that the exclusive provision of information in verbal form in this gatekeeping encounter resulted in profound inequality.

Furthermore, discursive research in institutional gatekeeping encounters has shown how restricted access to technical terminology and jargon can pose communicative problems, for example in understanding medical diagnoses in doctor-patient interactions (Wodak 1997). Wodak argues that jargon is used by medical and other professionals for, amongst other things, the precision jargon and technical terminology provides. She argues that those who have access to this elite language enjoy a powerful position in the interaction. It is easy to see how this asymmetry of power may occur in AVR interactions, and all the more in interactions which can be described as multilingual. Indeed a migration studies report on the IOM-administered Norwegian AVR programme (Strand *et al.* 2011:36) found that many applicants reported struggling to comprehend acronyms common in AVR texts. This supports Baptiste and Seig’s (2007) finding in their study on comprehension problems in gatekeeping encounters that a lack of knowledge of specific

field-based vocabulary may contribute to miscommunication between gatekeeper and gatekeepee. These aspects are relevant in considering how caseworkers in IOM and Refugee Action orient to these issues within AVR.

Differential access to *contextual spaces* (Blommaert 2005) (as well as linguistic resources) may also affect the outcome of gatekeeping encounters. Research has found that in gatekeeping encounters, access to contextual spaces can be complicated by a lack of understanding of procedural and interactional institutional norms. Baptiste and Seig (2007) for example, in their study of interviews in which applicants hope to gain citizenship of the United States, stress that gatekeepees may be unfamiliar with the culture and discourse style of US government bureaucracy; they argue that officials and clients may have “different implicit expectations of the proper ways to interact in particular environments” (2007:1920). They state that further to some proficiency in English, clients also need a level of what Jupp *et al.* (1982:244) refer to as ‘language socialisation’ – “knowledge of expected and accepted ways of communicating in particular domains” (Baptiste and Seig 2007:1920). Similarly, Codó noted that although clients were expected to “know and follow” (2008a:66) particular rules, they were not explained at any stage, and therefore resulted in client requests for clarification. As Sarangi and Slembrouck argue, “...bureaucracy is all about ‘playing the game’...knowledge of the rules is unequally divided over social groups – not everyone is equally good at this game” (1996:37). Clients’ lack of access to particular contexts, and therefore knowledge of communicative rules, can be further complicated by officials’ lack of awareness of their context, and the implicit discursive norms within it. As Baptiste and Seig (2007:1923) argue, officials may lack an understanding of just how routinised, and therefore abstract, their procedures become. Codó (2008a) provides an example of what she refers to as extreme routinisation where officials gave clients standard responses about time-frames, regardless of the type of request from the client.

Jacquemet draws our attention to studies which found that officials’ cultural assumptions resulted in communicative breakdowns in asylum interviews (with serious effects), “attributable to the intercultural, power-saturated nature of the asylum process” (2011:483). Jacquemet argues that asylum officials’ Western assumptions are mapped on to asylum seekers’ narratives: both Maryns (2006) and Good (2007) report instances of

asylum seekers' narratives being doubted because they were unable to provide a street name for their address. A lack of awareness that, in these particular locations, street names were rarely used resulted in the asylum applications being negatively assessed. It is clear then that different contextual cultural experiences between clients and advisers, such as caseworkers, may affect understanding.

This section has examined how discursive studies in gatekeeping and multilingual situations have shown that differential access to linguistic resources (e.g. language varieties, modalities, and lexical choices) and contextual spaces (e.g. bureaucratic procedures) have the ability to affect clients' voices, and comprehension of institutional information in high-stakes interactions. I will now introduce concepts which I rely on in chapter 6 to examine how caseworkers negotiate clients' access to linguistic resources and top-down multilingualism.

2.4.4 Linguistic repertoires

Moving away from a traditionally static understanding of language, I employ the concept of linguistic repertoire in chapter 6. The fluidity and variation in individual's linguistic resources is crucial to understanding how caseworkers represent negotiating top-down multilingualism and clients' perceived access to spoken and written linguistic resources.

In analysing how caseworkers negotiate institutional multilingualism, I approach an individual's knowledge of a 'language' in terms of being a *linguistic repertoire*. Gumperz's original understanding of *repertoire* was "the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the course of socially significant interaction" (1964:137). Hymes further refined repertoire to question its uniformity, describing a repertoire as "the mixes of means and modalities people actually practise and experience" (1996:207). It is helpful to regard a linguistic repertoire as a toolbox, with Blommaert and Backus describing it as consisting of "a myriad of different communicative tools, with different degrees of functional specialization" (2013:25). Individuals' linguistic repertoires include different – sometimes multilingual – resources, which individuals draw on depending on the context.

For Gumperz and Hymes, as Blommaert and Backus argue, “repertoires were tied to particular *speech communities*” (2013:12). The notion of linguistic repertoire, however, is complicated by the condition of superdiversity: communities are less fixed; knowledge of languages is not uniform, and now more than ever, a direct link between language practice and group or ‘speech community’, should not be presumed (Blommaert and Backus 2013). Communities should not be restricted to the geographical space. As Busch states: “[a]s a result of varied networking practices – among other things in media spaces – speakers participate in varying and deterritorialized communities of practice” (2012:505). In place of being tied to communities, Blommaert and Backus argue that “[r]epertoires in a superdiverse world are records of mobility: of movement of people, language resources, social arenas, technologies of learning and learning environments” (2013:28). They regard repertoires as individual “biographically assembled patchworks of functionally distributed communicative resources” (2013:29), influenced by polycentric environments.

Blommaert and Backus provide some detail on potential differences within linguistic repertoires which are useful in considering the problems caseworkers may face, and how they might negotiate this in their work. The manner in which people learn a ‘language’ (from full ‘*socialization*’ to ‘*specialized*’ language learning) via many different language and literacy resources, both informally and formally, results in a patchwork of skills within their linguistic repertoire. They describe different levels of competence, arguing that competence in one area “does not imply fluency in any other” (2013:25), highlighting the risks of presupposing functionality across the board (2013:23). Assessing someone’s competence in spoken and written production or reception within a language can be challenging. This is of course something which many institutional representatives must do as part of their work, but is a task particularly relevant to AVR caseworkers with regard to their reported responsibility to ‘ensure’ clients are able to make an ‘informed decision’ (as discussed in chapter 6).

Literacies, events and practices

Blommaert argues that “[t]hinking about repertoires forces us to abandon totalising notions in the field of language and communication, and to replace them with terms that identify actual, specific practices” (2008:5). These are ideas well-established in the tradition of New Literacy Studies (NLS) (e.g. Barton 2007; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič, 2005; Tusting 2013), particularly relevant for my research focusing on caseworkers’ negotiation of institutional *written* multilingual practice. NLS regards literacy as “best understood as a set of social practices” (Barton and Hamilton 2000:8), with *literacy practices* being described as “the general cultural ways of utilising written language which people draw upon in their lives” (Barton and Hamilton 2000:7), and as “common patterns in using reading and writing in a particular situation” (Barton 2007:36). A further key and useful concept of NLS is *literacy event*, which refers to any event “where literacy has a role” (2000:8) and is valuable in order to discuss how literacy is used in this AVR setting. Literacy events are described by Barton and Hamilton as “observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them” (2000:8), for example, reading a bedtime story, making a purchase or applying for welfare. Barton argues for a social understanding of literacy, in which people’s “literacy practices are situated in broader social relations.”. He argues “[t]his makes it necessary to describe the social setting of literacy events, including the ways in which social institutions support particular literacies” (2007:3), presumably over others.

The concept of people having different and multiple literacies which may be “associated with different languages” (Barton 2007:59), depending on the different domains of their lives is useful in examining institutional multilingual practice and understanding clients’ potential for epistemic access. Barton, in accordance with the concept of a repertoire, challenges the notion of a uniform and singular literacy, arguing there is “not one way of reading and writing, there is not one set of practices.” (Barton 2007:37). As Blommaert asks: “what counts as writing for people who write and read?” (2008:5).

Barton defines a literacy as “a stable, coherent, identifiable configuration of practices such as legal literacies or the literacy of specific workplaces” (2007:38). We can

understand then that caseworkers and clients have different literacies, forming part of their linguistic repertoires, and used in different contexts, domains and times. As Blommaert argues, “[i]nstitutional regimes that emphasise uniformity in communication practices will exclude, marginalise and silence people whose repertoires do not match the normative expectations”. (2008:4).

The concept of repertoires then allows us to detail the opportunities, constraints and inequalities people face, as “we are no longer trapped by a priori conceptions of language, knowledge and community” (Blommaert and Backus 2013:30). Blommaert’s recognition that institutions which perpetuate the myth of uniformity in literacy are likely to increase exclusion and marginalisation compels us to examine literacy practices in high-stakes gatekeeping encounters.

By analysing how caseworkers represent negotiating multilingualism, clients’ linguistic and contextual resources, and specific literacy events in our research interviews, I am able to consider how literacy practices within AVR administration may be shaped by the context, and mediated by the caseworker.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has introduced and evaluated relevant literature employed in the analytic chapters 4, 5 and 6. The reviewed literature on accounts (section 2.2) allows me to analyse how IOM and Refugee Action written material may function as giving accounts, revealing how the texts orient to criticisms about AVR (e.g. regarding voluntariness), and construct ideological motivations for running the programmes. My review of selected aspects of the Rhetorical Discourse Analysis framework (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a), and devices used to represent social actors (van Leeuwen 1996), provides me with the tools to explore in chapter 4 how these accounts are discursively constructed. In reviewing accounts literature (in section 2.2), I have also shown how caseworkers can be considered to be giving accounts in my research interviews. In section 2.3 I reviewed positioning theory, and considered how it relates to the construction of identities. By combining an analysis of rhetorical-discursive devices (as discussed in section 2.2) with other positioning devices

such as narrative and interpretative repertoires (as discussed in section 2.3), I will be able to show, through analysis in chapter 5, how caseworkers construct accounts when orienting to perceived institutional ideologies and motivations in the research interviews. This will enable me to analyse how caseworkers orient to ideological aspects underpinning AVR. Finally, in section 2.4, I reviewed literature on multilingualism in gatekeeping scenarios, and the concepts of superdiversity, linguistic repertoires and literacies. I have shown how differential access to linguistic and contextual resources may impact on clients' access to institutional services in a context of superdiversity. By analysing how caseworkers position themselves to multilingualism (using rhetorical-discursive devices introduced in section 2.3), in chapter 6, I will be able to show how caseworkers negotiate the provision of AVR information to clients in this, often, multilingual gatekeeping encounter.

Before I move on to the analytic part of the thesis, in the following chapter I present details of the research design and methodology.

3. Research design, methodology and data selection

In this chapter I begin in section 3.1 by describing the theoretical and methodological background to my study, discussing my decision to combine Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with Linguistic Ethnography (LE). In section 3.2 I then describe how I went about collecting and selecting data, and the issues I faced in negotiating access to the research sites. This section also includes my approach to ethical aspects of the study. Finally, in section 3.3 I move on to setting out how I transcribed and coded data.

3.1 Research background and design (methodological considerations)

As discussed in section 1, this research takes a qualitative approach, combining methods and concepts from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with Linguistic Ethnography (LE). As such it takes a critical approach to examining AVR, investigating how the potential for an unequal power relationship is challenged, maintained or managed through language and discourse.

CDA developed from Critical Linguistics (CL), though Fairclough (2001) amongst others (Wodak and Meyer 2009) has moved towards referring to the approach as Critical Discourse *Studies* (CDS), in a bid to acknowledge that this type of work has been carried out across a number of different disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, and reflecting that this interdisciplinary nature can be viewed as a strength. Although employing various methods, and applying the analysis to a range of different research settings, Wodak and Meyer (2009:2) state that these disciplines and sub-disciplines of CDA have at least seven 'dimensions' in common. They summarise that CDA approaches tend to:

- focus on naturally occurring language
- focus on units of analysis such as 'speech events' or 'speech acts' rather than individual words
- look beyond grammar to examine language as action/interaction
- include the analysis of non-verbal communication
- focus on interactional moves and strategies
- study the functions of contexts of language use

- analyse a range of linguistic phenomena.

The setting and goals of this research project also share some of these above 'dimensions'. I will be focusing on naturally occurring talk and text around events taking place between the institutions (the AVR service-providers) and the clients, to understand what role discursive practices have in the provision of AVR. In order to clarify my approach to the data, it is now worth spending a little more time on what Wodak and Meyer describe as the common principles of CDA, that is, critical impetus, power and ideology (2009:4), and how they relate, and are important, to this particular research project.

3.1.1 Critical approach

Jaworski and Coupland state that "in all but its blandest forms, such as when it remains at the level of language description, discourse analysis adopts a 'critical' perspective on language in use" (2009:27), suggesting that even if the researcher does not regard themselves as taking a CDA approach, they are likely to be engaged, to some extent, in a 'critical' analysis. This echoes Blommaert's (2005:8) argument that CDA is not the only analytic approach that takes a critical stance towards discourse analysis, citing two alternative critical approaches in particular: American linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. He emphasises that they are both fundamentally concerned with inequality in language use. He argues that what connects and unites critical linguistic approaches is a concern with "the nature and distribution of linguistic resources in societies" (2005:10). This contrasts with Fairclough (1992:12) who has faced some criticism from Blommaert (2005:24), amongst others, that his attempt to construct a niche area for CDA by dividing approaches to discourse analysis into those that take a critical approach is unrealistic in practice. Blommaert (2005:35) highlights that Fairclough's preference for analyses that are based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (and his suggestion that these are more 'critical') restricts CDA as it does not, for example, allow for an analysis of how texts are produced and used. There is, however, agreement that in any critical approach to discourse analysis it is not enough to simply document language use in society; the researcher must show how discourse "is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social

relations and systems of knowledge and belief” (Fairclough 1992:12). Similarly Blommaert specifies that a “‘critical analysis’ means performing analyses that would expose and critique existing wrongs in one’s society” (2005:6), uncovering “ways in which social structure relates to discourse patterns” (2005:25). This shared and declared goal of focusing on, but also importantly, challenging social problems is what unites CDA practitioners, largely distinguishing the approach from others. As Blommaert states, CDA explores ways to “mobilise people to remedy social wrongs” (2005:25) in what is often referred to as “problem-oriented” research (Wodak and Meyer (2009:2)). For this reason, CDA is very much practice-based and although there are variations within the approach on a spectrum of active to passive (see Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton and Richardson, 2009) many researchers within this field are committed, to some degree, to change for the participants involved. So although many approaches to discourse analysis may take a critical stance, a CDA approach explicitly states social change as a goal from the outset, whether in the form of training activities, awareness-raising or work practice guidelines, for example.

Returning to the context of AVR programmes, this research project aims to address the social problem of understanding how inequality may be constructed, maintained or challenged in AVR. In particular, how to support AVR caseworkers in providing AVR information and programmes in a fair and accessible way, so that applicants have the opportunity to prepare for return and reintegration in the countries of return. This goal can clearly be seen to share the goals of other CDA research, exploring the potential for asymmetrical distribution of linguistic resources between social actors in the research setting, as well as exploring structural and event-based asymmetries of power, and how this may affect participants’ opportunities for action.

3.1.2 Power and ideology

The notions of power and ideology are key to CDA, as this approach regards discourse – with its ability to constitute and shape social life – as a potential instrument of power; the aim of a critical analysis is to understand and document how this power works. Although Blommaert states definitively early on that “power is not a bad thing” (2005:1), he argues

that “the deepest effect of power everywhere is *inequality*, as power differentiates and selects, includes and excludes” (2005:2), illustrating why an examination of power relations goes hand in hand with the problem-oriented goal of CDA projects. Fairclough, in his influential work *Discourse and Social Change*, defines ideologies to be:

“...constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities), which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, re-production or transformation of relations of domination” (1992:87).

Jaworski and Coupland (2009:474) summarise CDA practitioners’ stance: that ideologies can be formulated, reproduced and reinforced through discourse, and therefore discourse has an important role in establishing reality and – crucially – which ideologies become the accepted norm. Yet they also remind us that discourse can also act in resistance to ideologies (2009:6).

Wodak and Meyer (2009:9) review the different concepts of power employed by social researchers working in this field and propose that there are at least three different distinguishable approaches to power. Power as:

- 1) a result of specific *resources* available to individuals
- 2) a specific attribute of *social exchange* in a speech event
- 3) a systematic and constitutive element of society

Returning to this AVR research setting, power will be explored in the following ways: firstly by examining how power roles are formulated in AVR promotional texts, particularly via orienting to the topic of voluntariness (ch.4); secondly by examining how institutional, staff and client power is challenged/reproduced via caseworkers’ positioning regarding ideological motivations for AVR (ch.5); thirdly by examining how clients’ access to particular linguistic and contextual *resources*, which allow them the opportunity (or power) to act in making an ‘informed decision’ about return, may be negotiated by the caseworkers (ch.6).

Although as mentioned above it is important to acknowledge that power is not necessarily a bad thing, many working within the field of CDA have recognised the often negative assumptions made about power relations within CDA research. Blommaert (2005:1) observes that it has been all too easy when conducting a CDA study to equate

critical approaches with approaches that criticise power. Wodak and Meyer (2009:2) also recognise that a major criticism of CDA is that it takes an overly negative approach; however, they view this more as a common misunderstanding of CDA, rather than a problem with the approach itself. Blommaert (2005) states that CDA should not be an exercise reacting against power, but rather trying to understand power and its effects – the result of power, of how it affects people, society and groups and how this power comes about. It seems fairly inevitable that given that the impetus behind many CDA studies is to understand inequality and how it manifests in society, there has been a focus on negative aspects of power, e.g. by highlighting examples of racism or sexism. Yet it is important to recognise that a focus on the negative aspects of power is not a prerequisite of a CDA approach.

The criticism that CDA takes an overly negative approach has fostered an alternative stance to exploring language and power under the banner of Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA). PDA is an approach to discourse analysis that seeks to “identify discourse which has been effective in promoting equality and enhancing cooperation within specific contexts” (Bartlett 2010:133). PDA’s stated goal from the outset therefore is to foreground common areas of understanding, rather than simply highlighting false ideologies.

Proponents of PDA place at the centre of their research the goal of engendering social change by participants, yet this is also the goal of many (traditional) CDA approaches. It also seems that, by always focusing on the positive, PDA might also be at risk of missing out key findings in the data which relate to negative aspects of power (just as PDA suggests CDA is missing opportunities to explore positive aspects). It seems of course important for any CDA approach to focus on the outcome of the research and the positive goal of social change; however, I feel that this is possible under a typical CDA approach, without a need for a specific *PDA* stance. Although it is helpful for PDA to remind us that if we look for negative effects of power then we will likely find them, and that a useful outcome is to highlight shared positive strategies of communication (rather than the negative ones), it is not necessary to employ an explicitly ‘positive’ approach. This study’s analysis of how power is managed discursively focuses on both positive and negative aspects; positive aspects are particularly evident in chapter 6, with caseworkers’ negotiation of top-down multilingualism to improve clients’ epistemic access.

3.1.3 Context

A key criticism levelled at CDA, particularly in regard to power, is that a CDA approach reproduces the biases of the researcher: the CDA researcher is accused of relying on “a priori statements on power relations” (Blommaert 2005:51), with common-sense notions of the social and political context being projected onto the data (Bartlett 2010). This particular issue has been central to discussions between CDA analysts and those practicing Conversation Analysis (CA) (see Billig and Schegloff debate, 1999) in which Schegloff argues that due to CDA’s inclusion of contextual data, CDA researchers’ political biases and prejudices can be easily projected onto their data, which is simply confirmed in the analyses.

Wodak (1997) has faced particular criticism (Blommaert 2005:51) on this issue in her key paper on doctor-patient interaction where ethnographic observations were said to be included in a rather unscientific manner, without any discussion of methodology or statements of how these observations were arrived at. According to Schegloff, a CA approach would avoid this problem by including only context that was oriented to by the interactants themselves in the speech event. There are two points to be made here: firstly although contextual data may have previously been included in some CDA analyses in an uncritical manner, these criticisms might be addressed by including contextual data in a systemic and self-reflexive way. Blommaert refers to such predefined ideas of power roles as a lazy reading of the context, which therefore does not represent *all* CDA research. Secondly, although CA is an effective and systematic method of examining interaction in close detail, and can complement a CDA approach (van Dijk 1999:460), as Billig (1999) has convincingly argued, it cannot claim to be bias-free and wholly ‘scientific’. CA itself can be shown to often rely on assumptions and common-sense notions, just as CA practitioners claim of CDA. Billig (1999:543) argues that CA has relied on a foundational rhetoric using terms such as ‘conversation’ and ‘member’ which “convey a participatory view of the world, in which equal rights of speakership are often assumed” (1999:543), for example, where interactants are assumed to share the same system of turn-taking. CA is therefore also taking a stance on power relations, yet it is claimed, fails to acknowledge this. Furthermore, Billig argues (1999:551) that CA analysts often distinguish between ‘conversation’ and ‘talk-in-interaction’ in institutional settings, thereby conveying “a

distinction between institutional social interaction, in which there is an asymmetry of rights, and 'ordinary' interaction, in which there is equality" (1999:551). That is not to say that there is no distinction; just that CA analysts must recognise that by distinguishing talk in this way, they also make assumptions about power roles.

I do not attempt to downplay the importance of CA work and its systematic and close examination of discourse, but instead intend to recognise that we need to address and work with the assumptions that we necessarily rely on, rather than deny their existence. As Billig concludes "[t]here is no need to fight shy of such a critical approach if the alternative is not a pure empiricism, but an unexamined uncritical view of the social order" (1999:556).

This criticism that CDA practitioners allow their own assumptions to colour their analyses (Billig 1999:544), together with Billig's (2008) charge that CDA approaches are often guilty of extensively using nominalisations (like the texts they criticise) reminds us that it is crucial for us to be aware of our own assumptions and language in our research. In order to address these issues, I delineate below my approach to context as a researcher, and the extent to which I include contextual information within the analyses.

3.1.4 Combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with Linguistic Ethnography (LE)

In this section I evaluate the combination of a CDA and LE approach for the goals of this study. From the above discussion of power and context (and the criticisms that CDA faces) we can see how the gaps in mainstream CDA research can be met, to some extent, by combining it with an ethnographic approach.

In a working paper presenting the importance of literacy studies as a central strand of Linguistic Ethnography (alongside interactional sociolinguistics), Tusting argues that Blommaert's criticisms of CDA (e.g. 2005) due to the manner in which "context is presented almost as a pre-existing set of framing facts in CDA" (Tusting 2013:3), is perhaps not so valid now given that many CDA practitioners incorporate ethnographic methods into their practice and analysis. Similarly, in an introduction to a volume focusing on CDA and ethnography, Krzyżanowski argues that recent developments in CDA studies in broadening out the meaning of 'context' beyond the physical have "opened up CDA to

fieldwork and ethnography and vice versa, thus pointing to their mutual complementariness in discourse-analytic research in a variety of increasingly complex social, political and economic contexts” (2011a:231). He argues there has been a “move towards more contextually bound explorations, which relate fieldwork and ethnography to detailed analyses of ‘situated’ linguistic and other communicative practices” (2011a:232), resulting in a merging of approaches. Indeed Blommaert proposes such an eclectic approach to discourse analysis – to include a mix of theoretical, methodological and analytic tools which he describes as “ethnographic-sociolinguistic analysis of discourse”, or more simply “ethnography” (2005:16). He argues that ethnography as an approach is often misunderstood and represented as examining only a very localised situation.

Like Blommaert, in recognising the value of combining CDA with ethnography, Krzyżanowski proposes an approach which he terms a *discourse ethnographic approach*. Krzyżanowski argues this “integrates anthropological and critical-analytic perspectives through, on the one hand, extensive fieldwork and ethnography in institutional spaces and, on the other hand, the critical analysis of discourses of (social) actors’ shaping of those spaces and acting therein” (2011b:282). He describes the main principles as being: problem-oriented; founding research on fieldwork and ethnography; studying different genres and multiple institutional spaces; diversified use of theory and methodology; retaining a multi-level definition of context (2011b:286). He argues that these complementary frameworks of ethnography and CDA allow “for triangulation between different genres and discourses as well as different types of analysis” (2011b:287). This combining of data has proven useful for studies in this area, for example Johnson’s (2011) study integrates CDA with ethnography in the analysis of language policy, finding that it “provides a foundation for understanding how particular policies are recontextualized in particular contexts, how such recontextualization is related to more widely circulating policy text and discourse, and what this means for language policy agents” (2011:267). Using ethnography assists Johnson to explain why the interdiscursive and intertextual connections between texts and discourses (established via CDA) exist, and what this means for participants. Similarly, Galasinski’s (2011:260) study of psychiatric interviews combines an ethnographic approach. He combines ethnographic interviews with critical analyses to illustrate tensions and contradictions in the different perspectives of this

rarely-studied communicative event. Returning to this AVR setting, the focus on the context in which institutional texts are produced and used can be seen to be crucial to understanding how ideological themes and power relationships might be challenged or maintained, and how these are related to wider institutional motivations and agendas.

Parallels can be drawn between CDA and UK Linguistic Ethnography (LE). In their paper exploring the interdisciplinarity of LE, Tusting and Maybin describe it as aiming to mix “linguistic analysis with ethnography, in order to probe the interrelationship between language and social life in more depth” (2007:576). They argue it includes:

“a cluster of research which studies relationships between the micro-level of language practices and the broader context and social order, drawing on linguistics, social theory, and an ethnographic methodology which places the researcher at the heart of the research” (2007:578).

In her placing of literacy studies within LE, Tusting (2013) acknowledges the importance of CDA as a contributory approach to this emerging field, demonstrating the shared foundational notions and goals of CDA and LE. Indeed Tusting and Maybin draw attention to the fact that many studies using a linguistic-ethnographic approach may be considered critical and “concerned to address inequalities” (2007:580). However, they recognise that “a critical position has not been clearly articulated as it has in, for instance, critical discourse analysis” (2007:580). Furthermore, they acknowledge that a lack of an explicit political position in LE is perhaps a weakness, as “the answers to some important questions about the social structures within which action takes place may be assumed rather than examined” (Tusting and Maybin 2007:580).

The importance ethnography places on participant-observation in research contexts in order to gain ‘insider knowledge’ of the research site, and an ‘emic’ perspective, means that ethnographic researchers must be explicitly reflexive about how their involvement impacts on the language practices being studied (Tusting and Maybin 2007). Having previously worked for one of the service-providers, IOM, I am well placed to undertake an ethnographic approach, already having experience of IOM and AVR, and therefore to some degree, having an emic perspective. By combining CDA with LE, CDA is enriched with ethnographic theory and methods, with ethnography providing the contextualised analysis which CDA did not traditionally provide, with context not being

assumed but analysed alongside the texts. Combining LE with CDA – and its explicit aim of tackling social problems – also addresses a key challenge for LE in which it “does not fully engage with its social responsibility in making the connection between small scale findings and wider social implications” (Creese 2008:237).

As discussed above, Blommaert (2005:14) makes a sound argument for taking an ethnographic approach to (Critical) Discourse Analysis. As such, and following other studies combining CDA and ethnography (e.g. Galasinski 2011, Johnson 2011), and being informed very much by LE research related to social justice (Creese 2003; Heller and Martin-Jones 1996; Roberts, Davies and Jupp 1992), this study examines connections between AVR practice and macro institutional ideologies, combining close linguistic analysis of discursive practice, with a considered understanding of the various contexts in which the discourse is set via ethnographic interviews and observations.

Having discussed the theoretical approach used, and its benefits for this particular research study, the following section describes data collection procedures.

3.2 Data collection: selection of data (participants and texts)

This section begins in 3.2.1 with a description of the negotiation of access to interviews and ethnographic observations, including the various difficulties encountered. In an attempt to demonstrate my “commitment to transparency and reflexivity” (Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski, 2008:189), I have spent some time describing the choices I made regarding the focus of the research. Section 3.2.2 deals with the research interview process itself, section 3.2.3 signposts to how written AVR texts were selected for analysis, and section 3.2.4 details ethical considerations for the research project as a whole.

3.2.1 Caseworker interviews and ethnographic field work

In section 1.1 I noted that provision of AVR changed hands with Refugee Action taking over the administration of AVR from IOM in April 2011. Because of this unforeseen change in service-provider during the data collection period and the ever-developing model of

AVR in the UK, the design of this research project has undergone many changes. Initially the aim of the research was to analyse interactions between caseworkers and clients, with permission being granted by IOM to proceed with data collection at its offices in the UK. Having encountered a number of challenges in negotiating access (discussed below), primarily due to the change in service-provider, the final research has focused on an analysis of AVR written texts complemented with an analysis of ethnographic interviews with caseworkers from IOM and Refugee Action. As such, interviews will be analysed, as Codó suggests, both in terms of being a means to gather contextualising and biographical data, and as a means to understand caseworkers' "views, values, and attitudes towards their own and others' linguistic practices" (2008b:159). Codó, however, cautions the researcher to be wary of taking 'self-report' data at face value, something that is borne in mind throughout the study. As Agar reminds us, "sometimes people do what they say, and sometimes they don't" (1996:157).

Due to the two service-providers involved in the research, the information below on interview and ethnographic observation will be split into four sub-sections for clarity, as follows:

- 3.2.1.1 IOM interviews
- 3.2.1.1 IOM observation
- 3.2.1.2 Refugee Action interviews
- 3.2.1.2 Refugee Action observation

3.2.1.1 International Organization for Migration (IOM) interviews

Approximately three weeks were spent at the IOM head office in London, running up until the end of their AVR contract on the 1st April 2011. This data collection element of this research was brought forward (due to hearing about the possibility of IOM losing the contract) having initially been scheduled for later in the year. I originally had three goals while working at the IOM offices:

- 1) to gain an understanding of the working environment of IOM head office (particularly since their recent move to new offices in Victoria, London)
- 2) to sit in and audio-record approximately ten meetings between IOM London caseworkers and (adult) AVR clients.

3) to interview staff and clients.

Early in February 2011, after re-introducing the research project to key management staff at IOM UK over the previous months (my previous contact had left), I was invited to the London office to introduce the project to all IOM London operations caseworkers at an impromptu team meeting called by the Operations Manager. The Operations Manager gave a brief verbal outline of my project, encouraging staff (most of whom I knew or had previously worked with) to participate. I was then able to fill in the gaps with more details and said that I would come to speak to staff personally, answering any questions they may have. I was keen to speak to particular caseworkers who provided AVR advice in English as I was only able to understand and analyse these interviews. This narrowed down the number of caseworkers I was able to work with, and two caseworkers were particularly interested in participating with the research. I intended to focus on one or two countries, and sit in on interviews with clients returning to those selected countries. With each caseworker, I spent some time discussing the process of the research, what my aims were and how I hoped they would be able to support me. I left them with an information leaflet and consent form and said that I would contact them the following week to confirm whether they were happy to participate, and if so, to collect the signed consent form. Both caseworkers agreed to participate; however, one caseworker was away for several weeks following this, which resulted in there not being sufficient time to collect any data with her, so this country was ruled out as a country of focus.

However, during February 2011 IOM lost its contract for managing AVR, with a government grant being awarded to Refugee Action from the 1st April 2011 onwards to provide the AVR service. This of course impacted on my research plans, and, more importantly, on the working environment of the office. Firstly it meant that I had to collect any data from IOM before 1st April 2011 when the IOM programmes closed. This was difficult because I wanted to make sure any participating clients had time to consider their involvement before I observed and audio-recorded their interview. In designing the research, I had decided to introduce the client to the research on their first contact with IOM, and then upon their return to the office for further discussions about their application with the caseworker they could confirm whether they wished to participate

or not. As such I was only able to involve clients who had intended to return to the office at a later date, or later on in the day, and therefore I was unable to observe interviews with clients who just dropped in and were seen immediately. This severely limited the potential number of interviews I could shadow. This was not such a problem before when the IOM held an on-going contract, but with a time limit of collecting data before the 1st April, it quickly became apparent that I would be unable to shadow the number of interviews I had hoped. A further effect of the end of the contract meant that many caseworkers reportedly began to signpost clients to the new contractors (rather than take their applications), which meant that fewer clients visited the office. The news that IOM had lost its contract was also said by staff to be common knowledge with potential applicants, so there was an, although unverifiable, sense that people were holding on for the new AVR programmes to start before they applied.

Due to it seeming less and less likely that I would shadow many client-caseworker interviews, I refocused my limited time at IOM London on interviewing staff in the Operations team (caseworkers), to gain an understanding of their experience working on AVR programmes and the challenges they face. Further to the two caseworkers who had previously agreed to participate, I recruited more staff by sending an email including a revised information leaflet and consent form to the entire Operations team (see appendix 5c), asking for their assistance with the research. I gave potential participants at least one week to consider their involvement. Upon return to the office for ethnographic observation, staff approached me to confirm they wanted to take part: I interviewed every staff member who expressed an interest. Because I was no longer focusing on caseworker-client interactions, I was able to broaden out my criteria to include any caseworker (rather than those working predominantly in English). I had also intended to interview management staff; however, no one was available to participate – understandable given the stresses of the work environment at that time. While waiting to gain access to observe caseworker-client interviews, I spent much of my time scheduling and carrying out interviews with caseworkers, and observing their work in the general office. In the end, because of the constraints of the situation, I was unable to observe any caseworker-client interviews. This significantly altered the design of my research, and although I did not obtain the data I had originally sought, the time I spent at IOM was extremely fruitful, not

only for gaining a deeper understanding of the workplace and AVR process (see section 1.2.1 regarding my previous role at IOM), but also gathering data on caseworkers' approaches to their work. Before the IOM AVR programmes closed, I carried out ten interviews with IOM staff. Eight staff members were caseworkers in the London Operations team, one was an assistant caseworker (an operations assistant) for an IOM sub-office, and one was someone who had previously worked as a caseworker in the London Operations team.

In the following section, I describe my experiences making ethnographic observations at IOM.

3.2.1.2 IOM ethnographic observation

Ethnographic observation is useful in terms of contextualisation, as an “input into talk and as a test of the result of talk” (Agar 1996:157). Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski propose that ethnographic knowledge is useful in three key ways: in establishing the context of discourse under study; in demonstrating how more general discursive processes play out in the site of study; and lastly, being used to research how language is “articulated with and realized in the studied social practices” (2008:190). As such, I was keen to spend time in both institutions observing staff at work.

Having worked for IOM, I consider myself to have extensive ethnographic experience and an emic perspective of certain aspects of AVR and IOM institutional life. However, this is somewhat mitigated by my position as an operations assistant in a sub-office, having an outsider or etic perspective in terms of the majority of IOM participants who were based at IOM UK's head office. This background in IOM and contextual knowledge and experience (to some extent) of the issues that caseworkers face allows me some insight into understanding what Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski refer to as “the significance of discourse in the daily life of an organization”, which assists in “linking the study of (discursive) structures to individual agency and daily practices” (2008:192). My time working at IOM (summarised in section 1.2.1) can be considered, to some extent, as a type of “traditional in-depth ethnographic experience” (Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski,

2007:186). Perhaps obviously, my interest in investigating discursive practices within AVR began to develop during my time there, with general research areas and initial themes emerging from the institutional setting in which I was working. As Spradley argues regarding ethnography, “both questions and answers must be discovered in the social situation being studied” (1980:32). This differed (as shall be reported below) to my experience in and knowledge of Refugee Action. I strove not to be complacent in my experience at IOM, being mindful that working in a sub-office was quite different in many respects to working in the head-office, with different pressures and work processes. As such, the whole process of collecting data and designing the research was cyclical, with new knowledge gained in subsequent fieldwork visits constantly updating data collection methods and analyses.

During the field-work element of my research with IOM, management staff arranged for me to be stationed at a free desk (while not interviewing), allowing me to work alongside IOM caseworkers and other staff members. I was given a key card and was allowed to come and go from the main office as I liked. I attended formal and informal meetings in the main office space, and was invited to social events after work. On one occasion after staff first heard about losing the contract, I chose not to attend a team meeting as some staff members appeared to feel uncomfortable in discussing this issue in front of a researcher. During these three weeks spent at IOM London, I took field-notes on a daily basis. In accordance with Bernard’s (2006) distinction of different types of field-notes, I made brief observations (‘jots’) while sitting with IOM staff in their offices. These were later complemented by more detailed descriptive notes with ideas about data collection methods (including possible restrictions), and analytic approaches. At times, notes were difficult to make in the office itself, so these were written as soon as possible upon leaving. Further to conducting ethnographic observations and interviews, I was also able to carry out what Agar refers to as *encyclopedic* ethnography (1996:8) in collecting as much background information as possible for contextual use in order to gain a solid understanding of institutional structures, AVR practices, staff routines, conflicts and tensions, and key concepts within the sector.

3.2.1.3 Refugee Action interviews

Having re-focused the design of the research after working with IOM and staff, I needed to re-negotiate access to the data site with Refugee Action, the new service providers. Given that they had just taken over a new and complex global project, which differed substantially to the type of work they had carried out thus far, arranging a meeting with Refugee Action staff to propose my study was understandably a difficult and lengthy process. After some time, a member of staff independently contacted me to discuss how they could become involved.

Like IOM, Refugee Action management initially introduced the idea of participating in my research to their caseworkers, although this time via email. I provided them with an information leaflet with a consent form (see appendix 5d) which was shared with staff. An initial meeting with interested staff members was arranged by Refugee Action management in which I could answer specific questions, and give more detail of my research in a group setting. Five staff members requested to take part, however, two subsequently withdrew due to changes to their work roles. Again initially I had intended to analyse interactions between Refugee Action staff and their clients; however, due to a significant re-design of Refugee Action's operational structures, most initial advice was now being given by telephone from a call centre in Birmingham. After this initial meeting with staff, I researched possibilities to record the client-caseworker telephone interactions. Complications in the logistics of how to include the caseworker, client, a potential interpreter and myself on the same incoming phone call, while ensuring all participants were able to make an informed choice about their participation, resulted in an unmanageable process. I felt this would impinge too much on caseworkers' and clients' time, interfering with the flow of the AVR process, therefore posing ethical problems. Although much time had been spent on developing these research plans, it seemed the soundest way forward with the project was to parallel data collected at IOM. This involved re-focussing the research onto interviews with caseworkers, discarding plans to collect interactional data between clients and staff. I was, however, still keen to talk to AVR applicants and explored opportunities to conduct focus groups. After discussions with various Refugee Action staff members and refugee support organisations, it appeared it was not possible to conduct focus groups with AVR clients due to difficulties in

recruitment processes. With the structural changes, Refugee Action provided most of its initial advice over the telephone (unless clients were deemed vulnerable), and representatives from refugee community organisations felt there were not enough people interested in AVR within their client-base. I therefore also discarded attempts to collect data via this method.

I was able to conduct the first three interviews with Refugee Action caseworkers in March 2012, a year after those carried out at IOM. I then sought to obtain further interviews with caseworkers at other Refugee Action offices, and carried out a further five interviews in February 2013 at three different sites, totalling eight interviews altogether.

It is useful to review here the different caseworker roles which participants had. As mentioned above, IOM participants were all operations caseworkers having predominantly logistical responsibilities across the AVR process. One IOM participant was an operations assistant, and was responsible for both operations and outreach work. Refugee Action participants however, had more specialist roles, due to the different ways in which the institutions divided the work tasks, although several members had changed roles, meaning they had experience of different tasks. Refugee Action caseworkers included pre-decision caseworkers (offering pre-decision advice to help people choose between their options), logistics, and outreach. These differences were borne in mind during analyses.

3.2.1.4 Refugee Action ethnographic observation

Research questions and processes were revisited after negotiating access to the new programmes with Refugee Action, spending time with staff, and listening to their concerns in initial meetings at Refugee Action offices. Again I followed a cyclical approach to research development, for example, in observing new AVR procedures and practice, I formulated new areas of study. Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski (2008) propose that there are benefits of not being a stranger. To a certain extent this has been the case in terms of collecting data at IOM, and the access to particular documents that this has allowed me. However, I felt at times that being unknown to most Refugee Action staff was an obstacle in negotiating access to their offices. Due to the interviews taking place in four different

sites over two years owing to difficulties negotiating access, the ethnographic observation element of the research at Refugee Action was unfortunately more limited than that at IOM, particularly given my additional experience as an employee of IOM.

Although it was not possible to spend an extended amount of time in Refugee Action offices, between scheduled interviews with caseworkers I nevertheless had the opportunity to spend some time alongside staff. I spent one day in the head office, sitting at a desk in the main work space. I was able to observe and make notes about office layout, staff teams and the use of the space – particularly given Refugee Action had taken over IOM's head office, when they took over the AVR project. I also spent time in reception areas, later writing notes about the availability of AVR information. Before beginning the observation, I was already very familiar with Refugee Action as an institution through signposting clients to the Choices programmes when working on IOM AVR programmes, but also within a short research project, and various volunteer positions within the sector generally. Although this does not afford me the insight I have gained at IOM, I feel I have been able to gather ethnographic data, and the experience, although different, was also valuable.

Ethnography is traditionally regarded as engaging with the people involved in the field of study, and participating in “the routines of their everyday life” (Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski 2008:186). However, De Fina argues, regarding her analysis of narratives of undocumented Latin American immigrants to the US that it is not always possible to conduct ethnography in the traditional form by immersing oneself in the life of the group (or in this case the institution) being studied. She proposes that ethnographic study is still possible in these situations:

“...ethnographic insights on the community to which participants belong, in the absence of direct observation of natural environments, can be derived from familiarity with the community at large through previous or ongoing research projects, the study of media circulating in the community and other sources of information” (2013:47).

In line with this, I have complemented my initial data, and gathered further ethnographic insights (of both institutions) by attending multi-agency forums on migration issues, keeping abreast of institutional updates and PR and social media campaigns.

3.2.2 The interviewing process (IOM and Refugee Action)

Interviews with staff members were organised at their convenience, and vary between approximately 30 and 90 minutes, depending on the time commitment and how much each participant had to say. At the beginning of each interview I reiterated the goals of the research (as outlined in the participant leaflet, appendices 5c and 5d), stressing that interview data would be kept confidential and transcriptions would be anonymised (in keeping with the ethical protocol detailed in section 3.2.4). I had previously given participants an information leaflet which they brought to the interview with the consent form section completed. Most interviews were carried out on-site, in meeting rooms/spaces which are normally used for client-caseworker interviews or staff meetings, and which were separate from the general staff office space. This provided a familiar and confidential environment for staff during interviews. Interviews conducted on-site provided an opportunity for me to visit the offices, and observe staff in their working environment. However, due to space limitations at Refugee Action, one interview took place at the caseworker's desk in the general office space, and another took place in an externally booked meeting room. Finally, due to sickness, and although not ideal, one interview with a Refugee Action caseworker took place over the telephone. I requested that the participant took my telephone call in a private meeting room to ensure confidentiality; however, I felt this interview was least productive as it felt more challenging to establish rapport. All interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone, for later transcription and analysis; I also took notes by hand, for back up purposes, and to remind myself of aspects which struck me as especially interesting. I was constantly learning about the work – particularly new aspects and procedures – so details about the programmes that I wanted to look into were also noted. I drafted an interview schedule beforehand for each organisation (see appendices 6a and 6b) which proved useful; my aim was to conduct semi-structured interviews, and to allow and encourage participants to discuss at length any topic they wished to raise, with the intention of eliciting responses on topics which they themselves deemed important to cover. As Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski advise, “the open format of such interviews is crucial (especially in the early stages of a project), as they allow informants to discuss matters and concepts important

to them, rather than the researcher” (2007:188). Because of this, for some participants I did not ask all the questions on my schedule, yet for others the schedule (which included various prompts within questions) proved useful because some gave very limited and short replies and I was able to refer to my sheet and work through the questions to elicit further responses. The questions were initially designed to elicit information on difficulties caseworkers faced in their work, and how they oriented to these. They were intended to provide background ethnographic information to assist in the interpretation of the client-caseworker interactional data (which was to be the primary data in my original project design). Although the interview data were eventually used in a different way from that initially planned (for reasons outlined above), the elicited responses have been productive in allowing me to examine how caseworkers negotiate institutional ideologies and construct professional identities (ch.5), as well as how they orient to multilingualism (ch.6). At the beginning of each interview I gave a brief overview of the subject areas I planned to cover, to give participants a general framework. These areas were: *about you; the working environment; the application to return; reintegration assistance; AVR and families; things they like/dislike/would change*.

Interviews varied in formality: some interviewees I had known and worked with for several years; some IOM staff I considered friends. Several staff from Refugee Action I had never met before; others I had worked with as agency partners in delivering the AVR service in my work. Some participants were very relaxed and shared off-record opinions with me about AVR and the work involved, perhaps considering me as part of their in-group, while others appeared quite defensive and formal, perhaps viewing me more as an outsider – whether due to my status as a researcher, an ex-employee of IOM, or a member of another IOM office. These differences are important to acknowledge because, as Jorgenson finds, how “interviewees make sense of and respond to the interviewer’s questions depend in large measure on how those being interviewed represent the interviewer and her objectives to themselves” (1991:223).

For all interviews I attempted to orient to the caseworker as the ‘expert’ as I did not want to make assumptions based on my background about how they might represent their work. This was explicitly rendered by asking questions participants may have assumed I knew the answer to. I feel this positioning of participants as ‘experts’ on the

whole was achieved, not least because my role working on AVR programmes as an *Operations Assistant* at a *sub-office* at IOM, perhaps automatically placed me in a novice position, and went some way to counter the power asymmetry inherent in an interview. However, our (to a varied extent) shared experience and knowledge did at times allow me to empathise with the challenges of the work they carried out, positioning us as equals in some sense and increasing the likelihood of building rapport.

For interviews with Refugee Action staff in particular, I was conscious of having been an employee of IOM: I was wary of how they would respond to me given the, at times, difficult relationship between the two organisations. Following Jorgenson, who problematises the distinction of “interviewer and respondent as ‘observer’ and ‘observed’, by directing attention to their emerging relatedness in the interview situation as each observes the other observing” (1991:210), I was aware of being ‘observed’ throughout the interview process. As Jorgenson further argues, “[f]or the analyst whose task is making sense of subjects’ responses, some awareness of how those subjects construct the interviewer is crucial” (1991:211) because this will affect how they respond to the interviewer’s questions. On the whole there did not appear to be any difference in this respect between staff from the two organisations. However, when I analysed the interviews, I felt that I myself oriented to this relationship by continually self-presenting as motivated to conduct the research (as I am) for the benefit of those involved in the programme – clients and caseworkers – in order to counter potentially negative perspectives of IOM within the sector, or indeed of sub-office staff within IOM. Awareness of self-presentation (and of being ‘observed’) also frames the interviews as *communicative*, jointly constructed events (Mishler 1986), rather than a means of gaining any ‘truth’ regarding their opinions, feelings or reported behaviour. These interviews are not interpreted as reflecting work practice, but rather as an interaction which *constructs* knowledge. Holstein and Gubrium argue that interviews are a site for “producing reportable knowledge itself” (1997:114). They go on to explain:

“Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies, it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge – treasuries of

information awaiting excavation, so to speak – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers” (1997:114).

Because interviews were taking place during the working day and, in the main, in the organisation’s building, IOM interviews were at times interrupted by other staff members requesting the assistance of the participants; some interviews were further interrupted by participants taking calls on their mobiles. Although these interruptions were somewhat distracting, I was always able to finish the interview, and there was no discernible impact on the participant. These interruptions were understandable given the busy nature of the office, and that that the period in which I was interviewing was one in which all staff potentially faced redundancy, having unsettled job security.

3.2.3 Written texts

For coherence, an overview of the AVR texts selected for analysis and why, and the purpose of analysing written materials, is provided in section 4.2, immediately before the analysis of the texts.

3.2.4 Ethics

A full and detailed ethical protocol with supporting documentation (see appendix 5) was drafted, and submitted to Cardiff University’s *English, Communication and Philosophy* (ENCAP) department’s research ethics committee. An amended version was re-submitted due to the change to research design. The anonymisation and confidentiality of participant data is considered of paramount importance in this research study and as such I sought advice from both IOM and Refugee Action staff for work within their respective offices in tailoring the protocol. Both ethical protocols were approved by the committee, and the research was given permission to proceed.

Although full details are found in the ethical protocol in appendix 5a, it is useful to give an overview of the key areas below.

Prior information

IOM and Refugee Action staff were requested to participate in the research in person, by email or by phone. They received an individual verbal explanation of the research project and a Participant Information Leaflet summarising the research, which includes a consent form (see appendices 5c and 5d). IOM and Refugee Action staff were given at least a week to consider their participation.

Voluntary participation

Extra effort was spent in ensuring participating caseworkers were happy to be involved in the project, given the possibility that staff may have felt obliged to participate, particularly as my research project had been briefly introduced to potential participants by management-level staff. This was reiterated with potential participants when I explained my proposed research face-to-face before the interview. Given that staff from both institutions and from various offices (some who I knew very well, and some who I had only recently met) chose not to participate and cited various reasons, it was apparent that contacted staff members did not feel under any obligation or pressure to take part. All participants were informed verbally that they could withdraw from the research at any stage and that they did not have to give a reason if they decided to do so. They were assured that the research was of course unconnected to their job role. However, once the research has been published or disseminated, it was categorically stated they would be unable to withdraw their consent. This was addressed in the verbal briefing and leaflet.

Anyone willing to take part in the research was required to sign a consent form, attached to the *Participant Information Leaflet* (see appendices 5c and 5d) which outlines the details of the research project. The consent form was to be signed after the participant had had time to consider their involvement, and had had the opportunity to discuss any queries they had with me. I provided them with my email address and telephone number for this purpose. When arranging interviews, I endeavoured to fit them around staff members' commitments and busy workloads.

Informed consent

The following issues were summarised in the Participant Information Leaflet and discussed in the briefing before the interview:

- identification as a researcher from Cardiff University (and verbally as an ex-employee of IOM)
- identification of the ESRC as the sponsoring institution
- outline of purpose of the research
- outline of proposed/intended benefits for participants
- anticipated duration of 30-60 minutes for the interview
- anticipated length of time spent observing
- confirmation that the research will be informed by participants' concerns
- confirmation that they do not have to take part and that they can cancel at any stage by saying so in the interview, by phoning or emailing me
- confirmation that any information provided or individual comment can be 'struck from the record' on request by phoning or email me or during interview
- confirmation that data will be confidential and anonymised, and how
- my contact details were provided in the *Participant Information Leaflet* and participants were informed that they are able to contact me at any point with queries, comments or concerns about the research.

Upon returning the consent form at the start of the interview, all participants were verbally encouraged to keep the participant information leaflet, detailing the project overview for future reference, and my contact details, should they need to contact me post-interview for any reason.

Interview and ethnographic observation data were anonymised upon transcription/write-up. Following Rock (2001), interview transcriptions have been carefully anonymised, not only by replacing names, but by excluding any information that might indicate, in particular, participants' job roles, experience and responsibilities. This has resulted in all mentioned nationalities, countries, client details, and languages being anonymised, in case participants are (mis)identified in this way. Questions about caseworkers' backgrounds have as a consequence, largely been omitted from transcriptions for anonymisation purposes. Participants were also made aware that they had a right to request particular identifying features were deleted from the data. Complete anonymisation may not be possible as it is likely that – in these particular open

office environments – fellow staff members might have been aware of those participating in the research. Participants were made aware of this.

Confidentiality was maintained as a result of the researcher and both supervisors observing relevant ethical codes of social science research and relevant legislation, in particular the Data Protection Act. Cardiff University's requirements regarding confidentiality are adhered to, and as such, I signed the Cardiff University confidentiality agreement (a copy is attached in appendix 5b). As is often standard practice for researchers entering an institutional site, I signed a confidentiality agreement drawn up by IOM UK itself. In adhering to its specifications regarding participant confidentiality, I have permission to complete this thesis and publish material using data collected from IOM.

Names and contact information were kept separate from the main interview data and were deleted from files post-transcription. All CDs of recordings, signed consent forms, transcriptions and field-notes were stored in a lockable filing cabinet. Once in electronic form, all audio data was stored on a password-protected computer disconnected from the internet. Any pre-anonymised data was only accessible by me. Upon transcription, audio files were deleted from my computer, with CD copies kept in a locked filing cabinet. I will keep all confidential data (i.e. audio files on CD) for five years from the date of collection.

The impetus for this project has always been a practical one, with the intention of contributing in some way to the administration of the AVR programmes. Although neither IOM nor Refugee Action will be directly involved in running the programmes from 1st January 2016, they are both still involved in this area of work. As such, research summaries will be sent to both institutions through management hierarchies and individual participating caseworkers, with the full thesis being made available upon request. I will offer to return to meet with staff to summarise my research for them if desired, and to discuss findings. Given the crucial contribution both institutions and staff have made in the research, it is important to feedback findings in this way. Findings will be further disseminated via academic papers and migration sector publications and media outlets.

Having detailed the ethical approach I have taken in this research project, I will now describe transcription and analysis procedures.

3.3 Transcription selection and analysis of data

3.3.1 Transcription process and conventions

Interviews with the 18 caseworkers generated approximately 15 hours of audio recordings (nearly eight hours for IOM, and just over seven hours for Refugee Action). This then produced 157,917 words of transcription. Interviews were transcribed adapting Jefferson's transcript notation, as described by Atkinson and Heritage (2009); however, I recognise that in any transcription, choices have been made about what is included and excluded, and as such constitutes a co-construction of the interaction (Ochs 2009). Bucholtz discusses the power of transcription, and states: "[d]iscourse analysts, no less than other transcribers, do not merely reproduce the spoken word in written form, but produce new texts that bear the mark of our authorship." (2000:1461). She recognises therefore that transcription – as interpretation and representation – is a powerful process. Following Bucholtz (2000), this research aims to be reflexive and self-aware, by continually considering the effect of my transcription on the representation of the participants in the research. For all interviews I transcribed the complete interview, rather than pre-selected responses to particular questions, in order to let the themes emerge from the data. In setting out theme-oriented discourse analysis, Roberts and Sarangi propose that transcription conventions at "different levels of fineness" (2005:39) are employed, depending on the thematic focus of the analysis. The transcription conventions I have selected for analysed excerpts within the thesis are sufficient in representing caseworkers' positioning in the interviews. Due to the number and length of interviews generated in this study, transcriptions found in appendix 6c include less detail.

Mishler (1986) advises that it is important to keep returning to the audio format to gauge the adequacy of the transcription. As recommended, I regularly returned to the audio files in order to verify my interpretation of the audio, when other interpretations were considered possible in the analysis. Given some participants' unfamiliar accents to me, repeated and close listening was particularly important in this research study. I also took notes during the interviews to supplement audio-recordings, as discussed above. In transcribing the interviews, I used an Infinity transcription pedal, in combination with

Express Scribe transcription software. Before each excerpt of data included in the analysis, I have provided some context to the discussion, including the question asked in order to reflect the co-constructed nature of the discourse.

3.3.2 Coding: identifying macro and micro themes

Coding in this research project followed Roberts and Sarangi's (2005) theme-oriented discourse analysis model. This involved repeated reading of each transcription/text, with line by line analysis, and manual coding of themes.

Working on hard copies of the 18 transcriptions, the two institutional leaflets, IOM's *Stories of Return* booklet, and a print-out of Refugee Action's online *Stories of Return*, I used different coloured highlighter pens to distinguish initial themes. All data was coded for emerging themes, and to examine the extent of the themes within the data set as a whole. Re-reading the data, I made notes about particular identified themes, with salient themes (detailed below for each chapter) emerging after repeated reading and analysis. Transcription and coding were carried out concurrently, on an on-going basis, and coding was revisited during each subsequent data collection period, due to the extended time period between data collection sessions, and the change in institutional sites and hence research focus. In categorising talk into themes within the interview data, following Ryan and Bernard (2003), I cut out each highlighted instance of talk (and surrounding contextual talk) from the transcription, and placed it into a pile of similar instances, underneath theme labels. This simple process allowed to me to consider themes all at once, and easily move instances of talk between themes, where necessary. Following Potter and Wetherell (2010), coding was as inclusive as possible, ensuring that any possible thematic instances were initially included. Some data seemed to have 'fit' with more than one theme, with texts doing multiple things at the same time, particularly with regard to social actors positioning both themselves and others simultaneously. Data coded within the more salient themes were analysed in more detail. Some salient themes were omitted for ethical reasons: although interesting to the research, even when

anonymised, the particular topic of the data may have identified participants. The data and analysis are inevitably shaped by these choices.

Although coding was primarily inductive, as Ryan and Bernard note, themes may also come from “the investigator’s prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (an a priori approach)” (2003:88). Therefore it is acknowledged that my identification of codes and subsequent labelling was inevitably influenced by three key factors: my on-going literature reviews regarding all areas of the research, my personal interpretation of the texts due to my experiences within AVR, and caseworkers’ meta-communicative comments within the interviews on aspects of AVR communication they found problematic, such as concerns about clients’ perceived high expectations, voluntariness and getting accurate information to clients. Throughout coding and analysis, I endeavoured to respect the institutions’ and participants’ involvement in the research, orienting to their goals in taking part.

Although I represent themes through the included excerpts, led by Blackledge and Creese, I have endeavoured to search for “uniqueness as well as patterns in discourse” (2010:61) in a bid to avoid giving an essentialist account of AVR practice, and to display the tensions within the data.

Categories of coding are related specifically to the research questions; therefore each analytic chapter, addressing a different research question, will be addressed separately below.

Chapter 4:

RQ1: How do IOM and Refugee Action discursively account for AVR in their institutional written materials?

To answer research question one, I made repeated readings of selected IOM and Refugee Action AVR written materials (see appendices 1-2), mapping (Roberts and Sarangi 2005) them for content and coding the text for recurring themes. As such, the following macro

focal themes emerged, which I regard as doing ‘accounting’ work by orienting to criticisms of AVR:

- **Voluntariness:** in both sets of institutional texts return via AVR is constructed as ‘voluntary’
- **Expertise and support:** IOM foregrounds its support, and expertise to set up a business upon return
- **Decision to return:** Refugee Action justifies the particular individual’s decision to return via AVR

Using Arribas-Ayllon *et al.*’s (2011a) framework (discussed in chapter 2), the texts are analysed in terms of how rhetorical devices, intrinsic to accounting work, are used to present the above themes. In doing so, further coding and analysis identified micro-themes. For example, within the macro category of ‘voluntariness’, the following micro-themes were identified:

- An absence of force via distancing AVR from the Home Office and ‘forced removal’ (deportation)
- Foregrounding voluntariness through passive/active role allocation
- Constructing meanings of ‘voluntary’ via ‘event work’

Chapter 5:

RQ2: How do the caseworkers at IOM and Refugee Action discursively position themselves with regard to institutional ideologies and construct professional identities in the research interview data?

Potter and Wetherell state that coding is not always straight-forward and that:

“...the phenomenon of interest may not become clear until some analysis has taken place and a number of attempts at theoretical interpretation of the data have been made. In these cases the process will be a cyclical one of moving between analysis and coding” (2010:167).

This advice was useful when coding for chapter 5, examining how caseworkers constructed professional identities via *interpretative repertoires*. Macro themes identified in relation to the second research question are:

- **Voluntariness:** positioning self in terms of the perceived ‘voluntariness’ of AVR
- **Perceived institutional motives:** positioning self in terms of wider institutional motivations/agendas for offering AVR
- **Negotiating the gatekeeper role:** positioning self through interpretative repertoires of *advocate* and/or *institutional gatekeeper*

It might be thought that the inclusion of the theme of voluntariness in this chapter 5 may be overly influenced by the research literature on this topic, and my framing of the research in terms of this contentious issue earlier on. However this topic emerged frequently despite never being raised through the interview questions, and as such appears to be an important topic for participants, validating perhaps the theme of voluntariness in the AVR written documents, in chapter 4.

Chapter 6:

RQ3: How do caseworkers discursively position themselves with regard to their clients’ linguistic resources and institutional multilingualism in the research interview data? (chapter 6)

I had originally been interested in client-caseworker interactions in terms of their being gatekeeping encounters. However, since the challenges in data collection, I was forced to adapt the focus of the study. Instead of looking at comprehension and power issues within the gatekeeping encounter itself, as themes emerged from the data, I took the opportunity to investigate how caseworkers in the ethnographic interviews oriented to clients’ comprehension of the programmes via their own experiences of addressing multilingualism in this unique work setting.

Although I did not specifically ask caseworkers about clients’ linguistic repertoires and literacies, they consistently oriented to this in the research interviews, suggesting this

perhaps was a key issue for them in their work (or that they perceived this to be a key interest for me). For this chapter, after the initial coding session, I analysed electronic versions of the transcriptions, utilising the MS Word 'search' function to systematically examine the text for talk which I regarded as related to multilingualism, searching for the following terms: *comprehension*, *languages*, *literacy*, *literate*, *reading* and *writing*. I was intentionally broad to start with, including orientations to spoken comprehension and spoken multilingualism, but I purposefully limited this theme to *written multilingualism*, for reasons discussed in chapter 6. From close analysis of the data, the following macro theme emerged:

- **Literacies:** contesting institutional assumptions regarding clients' literacies

A micro-theme, representing a crucial example of the above, also emerged:

- **Written receipt practices:** contesting institutional assumptions regarding clients' literacy practices and mediating written receipts

The selection of *receipt practices* as a micro-theme may seem overly subjective, given that it is not a theme which could emerge from IOM data, being specific to Refugee Action operational processes. However, this theme appears both operationally and theoretically of interest to the research. Examining caseworkers' representations of clients' access to contextual resources through the receipts process demonstrates how caseworkers represent themselves as literacy mediators, so not only challenging institutional assumptions regarding linguistic resources but also addressing (pretextual) gaps in institutional literacy (having familiarity with institutional systems). Similarly, orientations to this aspect of the service – how clients access the funds to assist in their 'reintegration' – can be regarded as critical in terms of understanding how clients' social position and life chances may be (re)produced. Furthermore, given that IOM no longer runs the programmes, focusing on how the AVR is currently offered seems ethically, as well as practically, sound.

Having detailed the methodological approach, details of the data collection process and analysis, in the following section I turn to the data, beginning with an analysis

of selected AVR texts. I will explore how AVR written materials can be considered as doing 'accounting' work, justifying institutional motivations for offering AVR programmes.

4. Accounting strategies as an aspect of ideology in AVR written materials

4.1 Introduction

An analysis of AVR written material contributes to an understanding of how the relatively new paradigm of ‘managed migration’ (“the notion that the movement of refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants can be effectively “managed”” (Crisp 2003:3)) constructs an expert discourse around the practice of voluntary return migration. Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton and Richardson – referring to Foucault’s ‘regimes of truth’ – describe expert discourse as being able to “legitimate particular social attitudes and practices” (2009:132). In view of the tensions within the sector around AVR (as discussed in section 1.2), these institutional texts can be regarded as accounting for (defending or explaining) (as discussed in section 2.2) their provision and promotion of AVR programmes for people who have sought asylum, or with undocumented/irregular immigration status, in the UK.

In his work on narrative inequality in the Belgian asylum process, Blommaert (2001) calls for texts in the asylum system to be scrutinised due to their powerful influence on individuals’ lives. Given there are very few AVR-related public information documents in the UK, the texts analysed in this chapter are powerful in their ability to shape the shared constructions of the ‘reality’ of return via AVR, while simultaneously contributing to individual clients’ knowledge of AVR. Elements of this institutional ‘reality’, however, are contested by institutional caseworkers, as identified in chapter 5.

In the analysis below I investigate the tensions surrounding AVR by considering institutional texts as ‘accounting’ for AVR and orienting to criticisms, particularly regarding voluntariness (discussed in section 4.3). As Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* (2011a) argue, “[a]ccounts are not just restricted to situated social interaction, but they also appear on websites, in documentaries or advertisements” (2011a:69). In these texts I explore, in Buttny’s words, how language is used “to interactionally construct preferred meanings for problematic events” (1993:21). I show how a range of rhetorical-discursive devices make AVR institutionally and ideologically viable for each organisation. I consider how these accounting strategies may potentially contribute to the well-documented (see section

1.2.3) trust and communicative problems faced by both institutions in administering these programmes.

I will examine the following two key texts from both institutions: the standard, English-language AVR leaflet (see appendices 1a and 1b) and the *Stories of Return*, which are narratives based on the lives of people who have already returned via the AVR programmes (see appendices 2a and 2b). An overview of the texts is found in section 4.2.

The analysis makes use of the Rhetorical Discourse Analysis framework (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a), incorporating van Leeuwen's (1996) Social Actor Analysis framework, as discussed in section 2.1. I refer to Blitz *et al.*'s (2005) three discourses of return (as discussed in section 1.2) and consider how this 'accounting' may contribute to these broader arguments for offering AVR.

Following Roberts and Sarangi's (2005) thematic analysis framework, examining how "language constructs professional practice" (2005:632), the following focal themes were identified in the texts as doing accounting work for AVR: *voluntariness, support and expertise, client's decision to return*. These focal themes were then mapped to rhetorical devices (analytic themes). The chapter is divided as follows:

- In **section 4.2** I give an overview of these institutional texts and the context in which they are used.
- In **section 4.3** I show how, through a range of linguistic rhetorical devices in standard AVR leaflets, both institutions justify AVR by constructing it as a **voluntary** choice, and, importantly, distinct from Home Office motivations.
- In **section 4.4** I show how IOM accounts for its AVR service via discursive strategies in its *Stories of Return* publication, particularly via foregrounding the **support and expertise** that IOM provides clients to set up a business. In doing so, I show how IOM largely omits the context of the decision to return.
- In **section 4.5** in contrast to IOM, I show how Refugee Action accounts for AVR through these *Stories of Return* by primarily justifying the individual **client's decision to return**. This in turn justifies Refugee Action's involvement in AVR. I show that Refugee Action's *Stories of Return* texts problematise the term 'voluntary' by formulating the decision to return as taking place in a limited context.

As McGhee and Bennett (2014a) report in a blog regarding government funding in the refugee sector, there is no doubt within the Home Office of Refugee Action's independence, and hence impartiality. This thesis does not question Refugee Action's or IOM's impartiality. The analysis seeks to explore what aspects of AVR are prioritised in the

texts, and how; it examines how AVR is accounted for, given the controversial aspects of AVR, and contemplates to what result.

4.2 Overview of institutional texts under analysis

This analysis chapter examines the themes through four AVR publications, tracing the themes from IOM (the original service-provider) to Refugee Action (the current service-provider), and offers a brief overview of the four documents and, using data from ethnographic observations and interviews, how they appear to be used in context.

4.2.1 IOM AVR Leaflet

The IOM AVR leaflet is a six-page, DL-sized folding leaflet (see appendix 1a). It was chosen for analysis because – based on ethnographic observations and experience – it was the most widely used leaflet among IOM’s promotional material. Aimed at both existing and potential clients, the leaflet provides a brief introduction to the AVR service. IOM caseworkers and outreach staff distributed the leaflet on its own, and, as part of an information pack sent by post. IOM outreach staff also sent this leaflet to agencies and community organisations to give out on their behalf to people thinking about return. The Home Office also distributed the leaflet to asylum seekers and irregular migrants in reporting centres (such as police stations), and included it with letters about immigration/asylum status (in my work at IOM, asylum seekers who I met often reported feeling ‘inundated’ with multiple copies). The leaflet was available in various languages (see appendix 4a for full list), but the English version is examined here, although it is acknowledged that the analysis in this chapter does not represent all translations.

4.2.2 Refugee Action AVR Leaflet

Refugee Action's standard AVR leaflet is also a six-page, DL-sized folding leaflet (see appendix 1b). Based on ethnographic observations, Refugee Action's AVR leaflet is very similar to IOM's leaflets in terms of usage: it is used by outreach staff and caseworkers to introduce the basics of the AVR programmes to prospective and actual clients. It replaces an earlier *Choices* leaflet that Refugee Action used when they were offering solely the pre-decision element of the AVR programme in partnership with IOM (as discussed in section 1.1.2), and before they won the entire AVR contract. Refugee Action's leaflets are also available in various languages (see appendix 4b) but once again only the English version is examined here.

4.2.3 IOM *Stories of Return*

Although IOM have published various versions of *Stories of Return*, this chapter focuses on the compiled A4 booklet (see appendix 2a) of 74 stories. This is because, again from ethnographic observation and experience, this booklet appeared to be the mostly widely used, and was included in the IOM AVR information pack sent to agencies and clients, as standard practice. This booklet also includes stories from people returning to countries all over the world, rather than a specific country, continent or specific group of clients, such as families or people in detention. It is likely that IOM has developed their *Stories of Return* publications to include different styles and approaches; the analysis in this chapter focuses specifically on this publication. Although I at times refer to these *Stories of Return* texts as narratives, I consider them first and foremost institutionally-produced texts, rather than client narratives.

The introduction to IOM's *Stories of Return* booklet, IOM states that the narratives:

"provide a snapshot of returnees who have agreed to share their experiences of the way in which they have used their reintegration assistance – some successfully, and some less so because of lack of experience in running a small business or unforeseen financial difficulties... Each story portrays an individual and his or her circumstances and to which country or region they return to" (appendix 2a, p.2).

This *Stories of Return* booklet only features clients under the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) which is for clients who have at some stage applied for asylum, and are therefore eligible for reintegration assistance (as opposed to irregular migrants on the AVRIM programme who are only eligible for travel assistance).

The booklet is split into two sections: pages 2-13 give general programme information and statistics; pages 14-41 contain the client narratives. With the inclusion of broad statistical information in pages 2-13, the booklet (or at least this section of it) appears to be written for agencies or even funders, rather than prospective clients, positioning the publication as a promotional tool rather than a preparatory tool. In this section, 'returnees' are aggregated (van Leeuwen 1996) into percentages and statistics to allow for a discussion of the success (and usage) of IOM's reintegration fund. Van Leeuwen argues that aggregation can represent social actors as "the object of 'rational' economic calculation" (1996:50).

The booklet mixes genres: the statistical reporting genre in the first section evaluating the reintegration component of the programmes contrasts starkly with the personalised narratives of the second section, which detail the use of reintegration assistance on an individual level. Fairclough argues that one aspect of new capitalism "is an immense proliferation of promotional genres ... which constitutes part of the colonization of new areas of social life by markets" (2003:33). The 'genre mixing' of promotional styles and personal narratives within IOM's *Stories of Return* booklet arguably reflects the marketisation of migration control, with IOM's self-defined role as a 'migration management' service contrasting with Refugee Action's institutional identity focusing on the needs and rights of the individual.

The numbers of people returning to different countries and statistics regarding what category of reintegration assistance they choose would seem to be of little value to individual clients, unless to demonstrate IOM's broader expertise. Their inclusion arguably assumes a readership other than the clients – perhaps agencies or governments. However, although these narratives could be regarded as intended solely to illustrate the success of the reintegration fund to funders, some of the narratives are also published in separate 'country sheets' (e.g. see appendix 2c), which include a translation of the narrative into the language/s of that particular country. These versions omit both the

introductory preamble informing the reader what the *Stories of Return* are (“a snapshot of...”, as described above), and the statistical information. This strongly suggests that the assumed readership for these ‘country sheet’ narratives is the clients themselves. This indicates that the very same narratives within the compiled booklet are aimed at clients as well as agencies.

This multiple audience is reflected in practice too, with the *Stories of Return* booklet being valuable for caseworkers in work with both clients and referral agencies. Ethnographic observation and experience found that IOM staff often used *Stories of Return* in their outreach work, displaying booklets on IOM stalls at community and sector events. IOM caseworkers interviewed also reported that the *Stories of Return* publication was a useful tool to use with clients themselves in planning their return. For example, when asked “is there anything you find particularly useful for clients in preparing”, Harry responds “I think *Stories of Return*... those are brilliant” (lines 271-272, page 116, appendix 6c). The publication was made available to clients in IOM offices, partner offices, agencies, as well as some UK Home Office reporting centres.

4.2.4 Refugee Action *Stories of Return*

Refugee Action’s Choices programme (the overall name for the AVR programmes) continues to use IOM’s publication title – ‘*Stories of Return*’ – for its client stories, however, it frames the narratives as doing something quite different to the IOM stories analysed in this chapter. The stories analysed in this chapter are taken from Refugee Action’s website, accessed on May 2014, selecting all 18 stories available at that time. Since that date, new stories have been added and others omitted from the site. Each story includes a photo representing the returnee, although not necessarily the actual returnee for anonymisation purposes. In text on the Choices website, Refugee Action describes its *Stories of Return* as follows:

Stories of Return feature the experiences of people who have been helped by the Choices service to return voluntarily to their country. Find out how it was for them to make the decision to go and the emotional impact of arriving home and being reunited with family. Get advice from people who have already returned and discover some of the creative ways

that they have built a new life for themselves and their families, from running a family clothing business to reconnecting with old friends.

(Refugee Action 2014).

These *Stories of Return* refer to both clients who have previously applied for asylum and irregular migrants – very often people who have overstayed their visas. This contrasts to the IOM *Stories of Return* booklet (in appendix 2a), which features stories on people who have previously applied for asylum and are eligible for reintegration assistance (so not irregular migrants).

The introduction to Refugee Action's *Stories of Return* online suggests clients – rather than any agencies or funders – are the primary intended audience, with the explicit marking of the intended ideal addressee in the following sentence: "Get advice from people who have already returned...".

At the time of the ethnographic interviews, Refugee Action's *Stories of Return* appeared to be published online only (the stories have since been made available in booklet format and on individual sheets for display purposes). Contrary to the apparent intention behind these stories, in ethnographic interviews Refugee Action caseworkers often evaluated them as not very helpful when assisting individual clients. Caseworkers suggested the texts were better suited (and more often used) for outreach work, using them with referral agencies. For example, when asked whether he would use the *Stories of Return* with clients, Paulo states "no I would definitely not use" (lines 498, page 261, appendix 6c). The fact the narratives were only available online was perhaps a contributory factor to caseworkers not using them with individual clients in preparing for return (although caseworkers could print from or direct to the website, if desired).

This overview of the *Stories of Return* demonstrates that the intended use and the reported use of these narratives are multiple and vary across the staff base, and indicates that the institutional representatives may not be using the texts as they were officially intended. Having introduced the texts under analysis, the following section examines how AVR is justified by constructing return as 'voluntary' via the standard AVR leaflets and *Stories of Return* publications.

4.3 Justifying AVR by constructing the ‘voluntary’ in Assisted Voluntary Return

4.3.1 Introduction

Categorising and promoting AVR as ‘voluntary’ has been a contentious issue (Black and Gent 2004; Blitz, Sales and Marzano, 2005; Strand, Bendixsen, Paasche and Schultz, 2011). For many AVR clients there are few real alternatives to AVR, with many asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected by the Home Office facing destitution (due to the government withdrawing welfare support), and eventually forced removal (deportation) by the Home Office. Bloch, in her migration studies paper on the experiences of rejected asylum seekers living as irregular migrants in the UK, summarises the situation well:

“Under the UK asylum system, the expectation is that once an asylum case is rejected, the asylum seeker and their dependents will return to their country of origin either voluntarily or they will be removed. Cash support ceases after 21 days and state housing provision must be vacated. The policy aim is to expedite the return process and within this context destitution is seen as a deliberate objective (Joint Committee on Human Rights 2007). A minority of refused asylum seekers who can demonstrate that they are destitute and are either taking steps to return to their country of origin or cannot be returned, due for example a medical reason, can apply for Section 4 support.” (Bloch 2014:1508)

Due to this social context in which AVR takes place, there is widely reported concern the programmes continue to be labelled ‘voluntary’ when – at least for some clients – this is not the case. AVR has been described as having a “coercive element” (Koch, 2013:5), not least perhaps because rejected asylum seekers, who are not entitled to work, are eligible for accommodation and vouchers for essentials (called ‘Section 4’ support) *if* they apply for AVR. McGhee and Bennett (2014b), in an introduction to a recent briefing examining the role of NGOs in the provision of AVR, characterise this as state enforced destitution. Human Rights Watch, in its 2003 report on the concerns of IOM’s policies and practices, states that:

“...nongovernmental organizations have also expressed concern about the voluntariness of IOM-assisted returns. Amnesty International has criticized the use of incentives

schemes designed by governments and implemented by IOM that offer financial rewards and free transportation as potentially coercive” (Human Rights Watch 2003:7).

And, in practice the continued use of the term ‘voluntary’ when some clients may feel they have little choice potentially contributes to a lack of trust in the credibility of the institutions and the intentions behind the programmes (see section 1.4.2).

IOM runs many AVR programmes around the world. Strand *et al.*’s (2011:72) study with Iraqi people returning via IOM Norway’s AVR programmes concluded that key issues reported by clients were unfulfilled expectations of return conditions (that is, conditions in the country of origin upon return) and a general negative opinion of AVR specifically due to it being described as ‘voluntary’, when for most of their clients (people who had returned) it was considered a last resort. The authors suggest the term ‘mandatory return’, as defined by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) is more accurate than ‘voluntary’. Mandatory return “refers to persons who no longer have a legal basis for remaining in the territory of the host state and who are therefore required by law to leave the country. It also applies to individuals who have consented to leave, or have been induced to leave by means of incentives or threats of sanctions” (ECRE 2013). The second sentence in the ECRE definition of ‘mandatory return’ makes particular reference to the situation for AVR clients in the UK. Blitz *et al.* (2005) alternatively suggest describing it as ‘non-voluntary’. This represents Black and Gent’s worst-case scenario: that voluntary “can be taken simply to mean an absence of force in removal, but where the refugee is effectively given no choice at all” (2004:7).

For this reason, in their examination of IOM’s involvement in border control, Andrijasevic and Walters refer to AVR as “neoliberal deportation” (2010:22), arguing that:

“‘voluntary’ does not stand for whether a migrant has been deported willingly or not but rather for the organizational modality of the AVR programmes. AVRs are not about forced removal but instead they explore and experiment with ways of enlisting the cooperation of migrants in their own expulsion through the provision of forms of information, assistance, and financial inducement” (2010:22).

Koch demonstrates that IOM itself acknowledges different interpretations of ‘voluntary’ with its distinction of three different types of return:

- ‘Voluntary without compulsion’: when people choose to return at any time during their period in their host country, “at their own volition and cost” (what Koch describes as a common sense understanding of the term).

- ‘Voluntary under compulsion’: when people who have been rejected for asylum, or who are unable to stay, or who are at the end of temporary protection, choose to return “at their own volition”.
- ‘Involuntary’: due to the host state ordering deportation. (Koch 2013:7).

The array of different people eligible for AVR programmes allows the government to continue representing AVR as something akin to ‘voluntary without compulsion’ (albeit with the costs covered by the institution), even when the likelihood is that many applicants are people whose asylum applications have been rejected by the government, or people who are classed as irregular migrants (with no rights to remain in the UK). Rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants are, after all, considered the intended users of the AVR programmes in general (Paasche 2014). So even in IOM’s own terms, AVR should be considered ‘voluntary under compulsion’ for irregular migrants and those at the end of the asylum process. And as Koch states, when return is ‘voluntary under compulsion’, “voluntariness often does not entail a real choice between return and stay, but instead a choice between different forms of return: Either as a free person receiving certain financial benefits in the form of return or reintegration assistance, or in shackles without any financial assistance” (Koch 2013:7).

As Andrijasevic and Walters note, “[w]hat is of interest here is that the programme targets both ‘illegal’ as well as ‘legal’ migrants. It hence aids governments to deport irregular migrants but it also offers monetary incentives to migrants such as those who have not yet concluded the asylum determination process or those who have been granted a resident permit albeit temporarily to return to their countries of origin” (2010:22). In this sense, the Home Office perhaps exploits the superdiversity (Vertovec 2007) of potential applicants’ immigration statuses, promoting the programme as voluntary, as it can be considered as such for some, while for many it is likely to be a decision made in pressured circumstances. This then manifests in multiple and fuzzy interpretations of the term ‘voluntary’. Like Rock, exploring the definition of consent in her research on consent-giving in police interviews, ‘voluntary’ (implying giving consent for the return) in this context appears to be better conceived as occupying “a continuum from explicit, positive “agreement” to mere “acquiescence”” (in press: 2), in that clients may have few or no other options.

In summary, it is evident that the meaning of ‘voluntary’ when used in AVR is in dispute, with the ‘voluntariness’ of the AVR programmes doubted by many while they continue to be promoted as such by the UK Home Office, IOM and Refugee Action, both explicitly and implicitly. I will now examine IOM and Refugee Action’s AVR publications and show how the voluntariness of the AVR programmes is discursively represented via rhetorical devices. I will show in section 4.4, however, that the power roles inherent in this label are contested by Refugee Action through its *Stories of Return* texts.

4.3.2 The representation of social actors in IOM and Refugee Action AVR leaflets as contributing to ‘voluntariness’

Both IOM and Refugee Action are challenged by the need to textually establish their independence from the government in order to demonstrate that their advice is impartial, while also acknowledging they are part-funded by the Home Office. In distancing themselves from the Home Office, however, and excluding the Home Office from the process in these AVR leaflets, the institutions construct AVR as uncomplicatedly ‘voluntary’. However, the *Stories of Return* (discussed in section 4.4) are used by Refugee Action to present a more complex view and challenge the power roles inherited in AVR terminology.

In his work examining how social actors are represented, van Leeuwen reminds us that with text analysis we cannot decide how well any one text reflects reality. “What we *can* do, however, is investigate which options are chosen in which institutional and social contexts, and why these choices should have been taken up, what interests are served by them, and what purposes achieved” (1996:43). By applying what he terms ‘social actor analysis’, I will examine how social actors – the institutions and the clients – are represented in the texts via linguistic rhetorical devices, and how this contributes to representing AVR as voluntary.

In this section, both institutions’ texts will be examined together. Copies of the IOM AVR leaflet (2009) and the Refugee Action AVR leaflet (2012) are included in appendices 1a and 1b, respectively.

An absence of coercion: institutions constructed as 'independent' (via linguistic devices of association and suppression):

The following are excerpts from both IOM and Refugee Action's leaflets:

Excerpt 1: from IOM's AVR leaflet:

1. Who we are

2. We are an international organisation – **NOT** part of the
3. UK government. Our headquarters are in Geneva and
4. we have offices in over 100 countries worldwide.

5. We assist in managing migration for the benefit of all
6. the individuals concerned and society at large.

7. What we can do for you

8. We work in partnership with a number of refugee
9. advice agencies throughout the UK to provide you
10. with assistance for a dignified and orderly return to
11. your home country.

12. Additionally, we may be able to help you resettle with
13. Reintegration Assistance. This would depend on your
14. individual circumstances.

15. We will help you to return home only if

16. you wish to do so.

(page 2 of leaflet, appendix 1a)

Excerpt 2: from Refugee Action's AVR leaflet:

1. **Who are Refugee Action?**
2. Refugee Action is a national charity – we are not
3. part of the government and will not give them
4. information about you unless you ask us to.
5. We offer confidential, independent and impartial
6. advice and information to asylum seekers,
7. refugees and people in the UK with no legal
8. status (irregular migrants).
9. We have been advising refugees and asylum
10. seekers for 30 years – last year we were
11. contacted 55,000 times by people seeking
12. advice.
13. For the last 10 years we have run an advice
14. service to help people decide whether or not
15. to apply for an 'Assisted Voluntary Return'
16. programme.

(page 3 of leaflet, appendix 1b).

Association and disassociation

Both institutions explicitly state they are separate from the UK government, distancing each institution from the UK Home Office and what it may represent to the intended audience. IOM emphasises this separation in the first sentence on page two of the leaflet in bold and in capitals, under the heading "Who we are": "We are an international organisation – **NOT** part of the UK government. Our headquarters are in Geneva and we have offices in over 100 countries worldwide" (excerpt 1, lines 1-4). Reference to the geographical location of the headquarters outside the UK creates the implicature that the organisation and its programmes are not under the direction of the UK government. 'Geneva' as a place may also index neutrality and justice due to its historical-political background. IOM can only imply independence, however, because as inter-governmental organisation, it is influenced by its member states (including the UK government).

The leaflet categorises return via AVR as "dignified and orderly" (lines 10-11, excerpt 1), making subtle use of the rhetorical device of contrast (Smith 1978). The leaflet

invites the reader to contrast the “dignified and orderly” manner of returning via an AVR programme – implying a return process involving planning and preparing – with the unspoken implicitly ‘undignified’ alternative and disorderliness of forced removal (associated in the public’s mind with early morning raids, coercion and potentially handcuffs) by the UK Home Office. This disassociation from the Home Office again functions to separate IOM’s motives from those of the governmental forced removals programme, with its ‘burden-relieving’ motivations (Blitz *et al.* 2005). This reinforces IOM’s advice as being non-directional or partisan, and therefore its AVR programmes as voluntary.

Similarly, Refugee Action distances itself from the government and constructs a separate identity on the central page of the leaflet. Refugee Action explicitly categorises itself early on as a “national charity”, again distancing the institution from the UK government and emphasising their independence, while creating the implicature that they adopt a humanitarian approach (lines 2-3, excerpt 2). Refugee Action’s promise not to share clients’ information (lines 3-4, excerpt 2) protects clients, therefore assisting in building trust (Bourne 2013), and *others* the Home Office.

In contrast to the institutions’ attempts to distance themselves from the UK government, the linguistic device of *association* is used to align IOM with organisations that are known to work for refugees’ rights, which might therefore be more trusted by (potential) clients. According to Bourne (2013) in her proposed trust practice framework, aligning is used by institutions as a means to build trust. This is evident in IOM’s statement: “We work in partnership with a number of refugee advice agencies throughout the UK” (lines 8-9, excerpt 1). The label “refugee advice agencies” implies the institution has a sympathetic approach to the problems faced by “refugees” in the UK, thereby potentially generating affiliation in the intended audience. Van Leeuwen argues that *association* temporarily forms groups out of social actors – “an alliance which exists only in relation to a specific activity” (1996:51). IOM’s claim constructs an implied alliance and textually aligns IOM with refugee advice agencies, making use of their presupposed trusted reputations with the reader and implying a shared agenda (through the use of “partnership”) with organisations who work for the rights of refugees. Whether IOM is referring to Refugee Action itself (which IOM contracted to counsel clients who were unsure about AVR) or to other refugee advice agencies distributing AVR information

material, this association works to legitimise IOM's AVR programmes. The "partnership" also perhaps generalises the association, implying working together more fundamentally and on a wider scale than solely the AVR programmes. Refugee Action, however, does not need to 'borrow' trust like IOM and *associate* itself with other organisations; instead it uses the rhetorical effect of figures (Mautner 2008:38) to foreground its own 30 years of experience advising 55,000 refugees and asylum seekers (lines 9-11, excerpt 2). Refugee Action thereby 'associates' with their own clients (and traditional workload) which implies affiliation and shared agendas.

This focus on the institutions' independence from the UK government functions to reassure clients that their information is confidential and formulates the AVR programmes of both institutions as not motivated by the government's ideological agenda to reduce 'net migration'. This representation of an absence of governmental power over the clients crucially positions AVR advice as non-coercive, and distinguishes the programmes from the Home Office's own forced removal/deportation programmes. However, in doing so, it positions clients as having agency ("the socioculturally mediated capacity to act", Ahearn 2001:112) over their future, and represents the AVR programmes as voluntary, or as 'non-mandatory'.

Exclusion via suppression

Van Leeuwen argues that representations "include or exclude social actors to suit their interests and purposes in relation to the readers for whom they are intended" (1996:38). He distinguishes between exclusion via *backgrounding* and exclusion via *suppression*. Backgrounding is where "excluded social actors may not be mentioned in relation to a given activity, but they are mentioned elsewhere in the text, and we can infer with reasonable (though never total) certainty who they are" (1996:39). Suppression, in contrast, is defined by van Leeuwen as when "there is no reference to the social actor(s) in question anywhere in the text" (1996:39).

The institutions' efforts to distance themselves from the government is also reinforced in the text via *exclusion*. The Home Office, or rather "the government", is included in both texts ("NOT part of the UK government", line 3, excerpt 1; "we are not part of the government" lines 2-3, excerpt 2) only in order to be explicitly and categorically *excluded* from the process, and disconnected from the institutions (as discussed above).

However, the government is also excluded in relation to the approval process within the programmes, and the financing of them.

Because the government is only included in the text to be specifically *excluded* from the process, it seems unlikely that we, the readers (without any prior knowledge), could ‘infer with reasonable certainty’ (as van Leeuwen advises) that the government must approve AVR applications or that it funds the programmes. So the application of *backgrounding* as a term here appears unsatisfactory. Although the government is mentioned elsewhere in the text, so by van Leeuwen’s definition it is *backgrounded*, its mention is intended to exclude it from the process, so it does not follow that we are able to guess the government’s role in this project. Consequently, I consider the government’s role in these leaflets to be excluded via *suppression*, though I recognise this term is not used precisely as van Leeuwen intends.

The leaflet informs us that EU ‘Community Funds’ co-finance the programmes, with the EU logo displayed at the bottom of page six (see appendix 1a). However, the UK Home Office’s involvement as co-financer (Home Office 2014a) of IOM AVR programmes has been omitted from the leaflet via passive agent deletion. IOM has excluded one of the two funding bodies, selecting one for inclusion due to its perceived positive connotations, and de-selecting another for its undesirable associations. This distances IOM from the Home Office and its potentially negative reputation as the institution responsible for rejecting asylum claims, and its associated trust problems (discussed in section 1.2.3). This effectively ‘dis-aligns’ them: the opposite of the aligning strategy that Bourne (2013) argues institutions do in an effort to build trust and benefit from fellow institutions’ positive reputations.

The Home Office is also suppressed in the same way in the Refugee Action leaflet, with the EU logo printed alongside the text: “Co-financed by the European Return Fund: working together to manage migration” (p.6 of leaflet in appendix 1b). As van Leeuwen (1996:41) acknowledges, it is difficult to know whether the reader is meant to be able to fill in the gaps and know who the *suppressed* social actor is in this respect. However, once again it seems unlikely the reader is meant to deduce it is the Home Office that co-finances the programmes. The omission of the Home Office easily allows the reader to assume it is the institutions, IOM or Refugee Action, running the programmes, or indeed another unreferenced institution that co-finances the programmes with the EU. The function of

excluding the Home Office is to represent AVR as their own project, something that IOM, in my experience as a staff member, emphasised in outreach work, rather than as a Home Office project with the potentially negatively perceived related Home Office agenda of 'burden-relieving' (Blitz *et al.*, 2005). This contrasts with Human Rights Watch's categorisation of AVR as "designed by governments and implemented by IOM" (2003:7). In distancing themselves from the Home Office, the institutions attempt to separate their operation of the programmes and their strong commitment to impartiality, from the government's agenda to reduce immigration.

In the IOM leaflet, the authors exclude the UK Home Office further by omitting the whole approval stage of the process from the 'How you can apply' flow chart (page 3 of the leaflet, appendix 1a), where we might expect the Home Office to feature in its role approving or rejecting applications (in a separate Refugee Action document the Home Office is included as the approving body in the flow diagram of the AVR application process). This crucial element in the AVR process can be viewed as being filtered via Fairclough's recontextualising principle of "presence" (2003:139), in which events can be *backgrounded* or *absent*. This allows the reader to assume the power lies with IOM to approve or reject clients' applications (or to assume all applications are approved). It is possible to see how this may create confusion in the advice process and elevate clients' expectations (something that caseworkers raised as problematic for them in their work in both interviews and discussions around the office). In excluding the Home Office, clients might expect IOM to be able to influence the result of the decision, the speed of the decision, or access further finances for taxis to the airport, for example (which might aid clients with children or disabilities to consider the return as 'dignified'), when these decisions are made by Home Office representatives.

Yet while the IOM leaflet frames the institution as independent from the UK government, it clearly formulates IOM's broader work as motivated to 'manage migration' for not only AVR applicants: "We assist in managing migration for the benefit of all – the individuals concerned and society at large" (lines 5-6, excerpt 1). This sentence reflects the ex-Director General's claim that: "[w]ell managed migration can enhance development and progress in ways that profit both origin and destination lands as well as individual migrants and their families" (McKinley, 2006). However, this "'triple win' objective" (Pécoud 2012:185) of IOM's has been criticised for its effect of depoliticising

migration (and hence AVR) and is said to negate “the existence of divergent interests, of asymmetries of power and of conflicts” (Geiger and Pécoud 2012:11).

The label ‘society at large’ is problematic as it relies on a number of complex assumptions: it assumes that ‘society’ always agrees; that IOM can speak for or can know what is in the interests of ‘society at large’; that people returning to their country of origin is unquestionably in the interests of ‘society at large’; and that what is in the interests of the government’s migration control agenda reflects the interests of the country. It also positions migrants as outside of ‘society at large’. The label ‘society at large’ then is powerful in its ability to group everyone (else) together – recruiting society’s voice in support – and therefore justifying the existence of AVR by constructing a ‘we’ group, establishing rapport between the author and the reader (Mautner 2008:43).

By categorising social actors into the two groups (individuals and society at large), the institution acknowledges that the IOM activities which benefit the “individuals concerned” (AVR in this particular case) are intended to also benefit “society at large”. This reference to benefiting “society at large” is the only (albeit indirect) example of the institution making the ‘burden-relieving’ argument outlined by Blitz *et al.* (2005:184), as discussed in section 1.2.2. This argument justifies AVR in terms of its benefit for the host country in relieving it of the so-called burden of an irregular immigrant population, casting AVR applicants as implicitly a societal problem that needs ‘managing’. Similarly, the tagline casts AVR as positive for the society in the country of return, as the country may benefit from the skills and experiences of its returning citizens, therefore making a ‘human-capital’ argument (identified by Blitz *et al.* (2005)) for AVR.

The tagline also has particular ideological significance: in this sentence the clients are referred to as “the individuals concerned”, yet the remainder of the leaflet refers to the client directly (“you”, “your”, e.g. lines 7 and 11 in excerpt 1). This change of apparent intended addressee in this sentence reflects that it is an IOM tagline which is used for other ‘migration management’ projects, not just AVR. In this sense the sentence is not aimed specifically at the potential clients in this leaflet’s audience, but rather at all audiences with which IOM may interact: member and non-member governments, migrants, domestic politics/the general public, agency/institutional staff.

In this way, IOM UK’s representation of its work in this particular context as somehow independent, and AVR as voluntary or non-coercive, is perhaps hampered by

its parallel and wider institutional and international goal of representing AVR (and migration management) as in the best interests of society as a whole. The two represented agendas of working both *for migrants* and *for society* are evident in this one sentence; as Georgi states, a major criticism of IOM is that “the beneficiaries of IOM’s activities are not so easily established” (2012:46).

So in summary, IOM and Refugee Action both explicitly state they are not part of the UK government, with other more implicit strategies also contributing to this position. By excluding the Home Office from their literature, the institutions avoid their motivations for running the programmes being conflated with Home Office removal targets, which are widely debated in the media (e.g. The Guardian 2013). They distance themselves from the government’s explicit aim to reduce immigration figures by removing and being “tough on” (Home Office 2014b) people who have no legal right to remain in the UK. This creates a context of voluntariness, where there is no coercion from the government, and the decision to return is based on the availability of choice. IOM’s broader work and ideological underpinnings, however, acknowledge that governmental goals are also a motivation.

The following section examines the representation of social actors via active and passive role allocation, and considers how this contributes to the construction of AVR as voluntary.

Foregrounding voluntariness through active and passive role allocation for clients and institutions, and through the lexicalisation of AVR

In examining social actor representation, van Leeuwen asks “who is represented as ‘agent’ (‘Actor’), who as ‘patient’ (‘Goal’) with respect to a given action?” (1996:43). He argues that when social actors are *activated*, they are represented as “the active, dynamic forces in an activity” (1996:43); when they are *passivated*, however, they are represented as “‘undergoing’ the activity” (1996:43). Van Leeuwen argues that this distinction is important because “[r]epresentations can reallocate roles, rearrange the social relations between participants” (1996:43). In his development of social actor analysis, Fairclough states that the “significance of ‘activation’ and ‘passivation’ is rather transparent: where

social actors are mainly activated, their capacity for agentive action, for making things happen, for controlling others and so forth is accentuated, where they are mainly passivated, what is accentuated is their subjection to processes, them being affected by the actions of others, and so forth” (2003:150).

By examining how clients’ roles are allocated as passive or active in both the IOM and Refugee Action AVR leaflets, we can see how the institutions continue to represent the decision to return (and the on-going success of the return) as the responsibility of the client, conceptualising AVR as voluntary – even though a client’s capacity to act (as discussed earlier) and the choices available to them might indeed be limited. However, the analysis further demonstrates that when the institutions are activated, it is in the discourse of *providing assistance*; in other words, framing the institutional role as one of supporting people in need of help. Fairclough explains how a dominant discourse type can become common sense:

“[n]aturalization is the royal road to common sense. Ideologies come to be ideological common sense to the extent that the discourse types which embody them become naturalized... What comes to be common sense is thus in large measure determined by who exercises power and domination in a society or a social institution” (2001:76).

From this perspective, IOM and Refugee Action, as central players in AVR, are in a position where they can discursively construct what return is – or should be. It is through the naturalization of AVR, via the use of particular value-laden lexical items and role allocation, that AVR is represented as humanitarian assistance, rather than a migration control tool of the government. The analysis shall address each leaflet in turn.

IOM leaflet

Although clients are *activated* at strategic points – in reference to the decision to return, in applying for return (up until the approval stage), and in reference to migrating (e.g. in the noun ‘asylum-seeker’), for the most part they are passivated in the IOM leaflet, for example:

Excerpt 3: in the heading:

What we can do for you

(page 2 of leaflet, appendix 1a)

Excerpt 4: in the 'pull-out and keep card' heading:

Need help to return?

(page 2 of leaflet, appendix 1a)

Excerpt 5: in the flow chart:

An adviser from IOM will process your application

...

He/she will help with your documents and IOM will pay for your travel

(page 4 of leaflet, appendix 1a)

In these examples, IOM is represented as the active agent, while the client is passivated, as they are *receiving* the assistance from IOM and their application is *processed by* IOM. The combination of role allocation and these lexical choices represent IOM as having the power to offer aid/assistance to people requiring “help”. This categorises AVR then as humanitarian and IOM’s role as non-coercive.

Clients become activated in the application process, framed by the title “How you can apply” (appendix 1a, p.3) which emphasises that it is the clients’ choice to apply and return via AVR. Subsequently they then are formulated as being active in a number of steps in the AVR process: they “fill in” the form, they “call” the IOM, they “download”, they “visit” the offices, and they “send” the form (appendix 1a, p.3-4). Each of these activations emphasises that the client is voluntarily engaged in the process. Importantly, clients are also activated in reference to the *decision* to return on the cover of the leaflet:

Excerpt 6:

Thinking of going back to your home country?

(page 1 of leaflet, appendix 1a)

This sentence is conversationalised (Fairclough 1995) with the elision of ‘are you’ to form inclusive relational alliance, creating an informal relationship. The use of the gerund in

“thinking” also represents the decision as on-going and something to deliberate over. Clients are again activated later in the return narratives included in the leaflet:

Excerpt 7:

When he decided to return to Uganda...

(page 6 of leaflet, appendix 1a)

At the close of the narratives clients are activated again in relation to developing their business: “He has now set up his own business”; He is doing well now and even employs an assistant”; “she can combine looking after her young son with earning a living” (appendix 1a, p.6). This role allocation and personalisation, assigns agency to the client, and renders them as being responsible for their (and their families’) return and future success.

Refugee Action leaflet

In the Refugee Action leaflet, the same pattern of passive/active role allocation is evident, where clients are *activated* with regard to migrating, making a decision about return and requesting Refugee Action’s help, and *passivated* when receiving assistance from Refugee Action, again lexicalising AVR in the discourse of assistance:

Excerpt 8:

“If you decide to return, we will:

- help you plan your return
- offer support in the airport and in your country...” (page 2 of leaflet, appendix 1b)

In the Refugee Action leaflet clients are activated in terms of the decision to return, for example:

Excerpt 9:

“If you decide to return...”

“If you decide not to return...” (page 4 of leaflet, appendix 1b)

Again this creates an implicature that clients have control over their future, and foregrounds making a choice about whether they apply for AVR, importantly representing Refugee Action as providing non-directive advice. The most personal form “you” is used, emphasising agency. And – like the IOM leaflet – clients are also activated in requesting the help of Refugee Action:

Excerpt 10:

Call Choices free if you would like to:

- *return voluntarily to your country, or*
- *talk to someone confidentially to decide whether to return*

(page 1 of leaflet, appendix 1b)

Although this positively formulates Refugee Action’s support as non-coercive, activation in this leaflet creates the implicature that the decision to return is uncomplicatedly voluntary and the decision is not made in a limited context. As Arribas-Ayllon, Sarangi and Clarke (2011b:57) find in their examination of personalisation in genomic knowledge, the Refugee Action leaflet is loosely structured around a question-answer format (“Can the Choices Service help me?”, “What is the Choices Service?”, “What does the Choices Service offer?”, see appendix 1b), creating an imaginary dialogue between a concerned potential applicant and a supportive institution, contributing to the relationship as one where the institution is reacting and responding to the client’s needs and requests, assisting to represent AVR’s advice as non-directive.

The importance of the lexicalisation of AVR in the distinction between ‘assisting clients to return home’ and an alternative of (for example) ‘*sending* clients home’ was also noted amongst IOM management. It is a word choice which (during my employment there at least) the IOM communications team pre-emptively disputed via media briefings and press releases, and discouraged employees from using. In doing so IOM contests the lack of agency “sending” implies clients have. Mautner reflects on the differences between constructions such as “the immigrant left” and “the immigrant was deported” (2008:41), considering the effect this has on ideologically construing actors and actions. Caseworkers in my research interviews and observations occasionally use “sending”; however, they generally orient to its ideological unsuitability. For example, when discussing countries

which may be deemed unstable, Sara corrects herself: “I find it quite challenging to send to er assist clients ... um in terms of going back to countries when you know there are concerns” (lines 21-23, interview 18, appendix 6c) (see also Harry: line 5, excerpt 6, chapter 5). The use of “send” and “sent” is also evident in media reports around AVR, particularly when government ministers want to claim responsibility for the returns in order to meet targets and make ‘burden-relieving’ arguments for AVR (e.g. Damian Green in the Telegraph, 2011). In this situation the role allocation suits their agenda. This indicates that the lexicalisation and role allocation of AVR within these leaflets is carefully considered; it represents AVR advice as, importantly, non-coercive yet, again, it creates an environment where the government’s coercion is not acknowledged.

The use of agency constructs IOM and Refugee Action’s programmes as voluntary and we can see how the institutions represent the client as being responsible for making the decision to return, and furthermore for making a success of their reintegration. Although the role of the institution is very often activated within the text, it is discursively represented via verb choice as being supportive, through *helping* and *offering*. Rather than representing the institutions as all-powerful and controlling, as Fairclough (2003) and van Leeuwen (1996) suggest, this represents the role they play as active, but in *supporting* the client’s actions/decision. IOM and Refugee Action’s lexicalisation (Fairclough 2003:129) of AVR aligns AVR practice with humanitarian assistance, rather than migration control. It is effective in communicating their impartiality in providing AVR, yet it also constructs a simplified meaning of voluntary, where the context of the decision (and governmental coercion) is not acknowledged, understandably perhaps difficult to do in a small leaflet.

IOM’s discourse of *assistance* has been previously noted by Human Rights organisations (e.g. Human Rights Watch 2003). The analysis in this chapter further illustrates Andrijasevic and Walters (2010) political studies-based findings regarding IOM’s government of borders which reflect how “IOM describes key aspects of its activities using the language of humanitarian assistance” (2010:5). The authors also note how this “has troubled some of the agencies with a longstanding association with humanitarianism” (2010:5) because IOM does not have a mandate to protect human rights, and was founded on economic priorities rather than humanitarian ones.

Having examined how the notion of ‘voluntary’ in AVR is constructed in the institutional leaflets, I will now turn to the *Stories of Return* texts. I will begin by examining salient themes of how IOM and Refugee Action account for AVR, and then consider how this contributes to an understanding of voluntariness.

4.4 Accounting for AVR in *Stories of Return* texts

When conducting ethnographic fieldwork I was unable to access information from either institution on how the *Stories of Return* were collected/elicited from returning clients (as it was not available). Therefore I do not have any data (for example, interview transcripts, notes or forms) to compare with the final stories analysed below. So although these stories are entextualisations (discussed in section 2.2.3 of the literature review) of the social practice of return, it is not known how the clients themselves represented their journey – for example, do the returnees in these stories consider return as going ‘home’? Do they consider it a new life? What topics did they raise in discussing their return? Was starting a business a bigger concern than making the decision to return?

Nevertheless, as Eastmond reminds us: “...stories cannot be seen simply reflecting life as lived, but should be seen as creative constructions or interpretations of the past, generated in specific contexts of the present” (2007:250). These return experiences then can be considered narratives entextualised for the benefit of IOM and Refugee Action’s institutional agendas. In this sense we can recognise that the voice of the client and the institutional voice are blended. Maryns (2006), in her work examining asylum seekers’ narratives in the Belgian asylum system, shows how an asylum seeker’s talk is transformed as it passes through various actors in the asylum procedure to become a final co-produced narrative, prioritising specific detail and events over others. However, unlike Maryns, as stated, I do not have information on how these stories were elicited or the data in any other form, so I am unable to look at the recontextualisation process itself. Yet the *Stories of Return* data does allow for an analysis of the different institutional approaches to the entextualisation of the return experience. Whose return experiences are entextualised, how they are entextualised, what is included, what topic they focus on, are all decisions made by IOM and Refugee Action.

This section then examines how each institution entextualises clients' experiences of return in these institutional texts. I argue that each institution's different intended function for the narratives results in a different construction of the voluntariness of AVR. These two very different institutional approaches to AVR clients' narratives, demonstrate Mishler's (1997) reminder that we should not assume there is one singular story. IOM's focus on reintegration assistance accounts for its suitability as an organisation to carry out the role; its showcasing of its *expertise and support* constitutes a salient theme in its accounting work. While Refugee Action uses the narratives to justify the individual's *decision to return* as being the right one for that person, orienting to criticisms regarding voluntariness. While both themes are evident in both sets of *Stories of Return*, the theme of *expertise and support* is more salient in IOM narratives, while the theme of the *decision to return* is more salient in Refugee Action narratives. By analysing the texts in terms of their accounting function, we can consider how discursive representations of AVR may work on an ideological level to justify the actions of these institutions involved in international 'migration management'.

4.4.1 IOM *Stories of Return* (2007): expertise and support

As discussed earlier in section 4.1.3, IOM introduce this *Stories of Return* booklet (institutional texts relating previous clients' experiences of AVR) by stating that these narratives are an opportunity to share the experiences of previous returnees in how they have used their reintegration assistance:

Excerpt 11:

This edition of Stories of Return will again provide a snap shot of returnees who have agreed to share their experiences of the way in which they have used their reintegration assistance – some successfully, and some less so because of lack of experience in running a small business or unforeseen financial difficulties.

(page 2 of publication, appendix 2a)

This introduction frames the whole return experience in terms of how clients have used their *financial* assistance; the narratives are used to account specifically for the success of

the reintegration assistance provided by IOM. This introduction signals (and indeed reflects) that the main topic of each story is the business start-up element, perhaps displaying what the institution perceives as the most important, or the most institutionally-achievable element of it; or the one with the most immediate and tangible results. However, the introduction of the *Stories of Return* booklet goes on to state that:

Excerpt 12:

Each story portrays an individual and his or her circumstances and to which country or region they return to.

(page 2 of publication, appendix 2a)

Excerpt 12 above broadens out the scope of the narratives rather than focusing solely on the ‘reintegration assistance’, suggesting the narratives could be interpreted as representing clients’ more vague “circumstances” upon return. This may lead to frustrated expectations about what the narratives are meant to represent, with the narratives being read as representations of the *whole* return experience, rather than just an evaluation of the (business element) of the reintegration assistance.

The following section examines how IOM uses the narratives to account for its involvement in AVR, showcasing its expertise and support through rhetorical-discursive devices.

IOM accounting for AVR by providing clients with a sustainable income

As explicitly stated by IOM, the main topic of the narratives is a detailed description of how the reintegration assistance has been used by the client to set up a small business. IOM’s focus on the business funding element of the reintegration assistance in these narratives allows the institution to account for AVR by showcasing how IOM’s financial assistance has helped the client, and what effect the support has had both on the *individual* and on the *country of origin*. The narratives select the reintegration assistance (particularly business set-up) as the focus of the narrative, rather than other aspects of

return as a whole (for example, feelings about return, children settling in, family reunion, personal and country security issues) or the decision to return. As van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) argue, elements of the social practice will be altered in recontextualisation and not all aspects of return will be included. In selecting this topic, IOM are able to showcase the assistance it can provide and demonstrate how it can solve business-related and logistical problems. The ‘complicating actions’ (Labov and Waletzky 1967:12) in these narratives are therefore largely business-related. IOM’s orientation to the utility of the IOM’s programmes is very common, where IOM provides the solution to specific obstacles faced by clients upon return (see appendix 2a: Mrs G, p.17; unnamed p.18; Mr S, p.19; Ms N, p.20). For example, Mr O’s business was re-started by IOM’s further assistance:

Excerpt 13: Mr O, Nigeria:

Mr. O returned to Nigeria in September 2004 after spending a little over a year in the UK. He used his reintegration assistance to purchase a passenger bus. He employs a driver and a conductor and uses the profits to fund his theology studies. He has plans to expand his transport business and employ more people whilst working as a pastor and evangelist. Unfortunately the bus has been off road for a while because it needed a new engine, which John [sic] could not afford. IOM agreed to fund this in order to make his business operational again.

(page 18 of publication, appendix 2a)

Even when IOM is unable to resolve particular business-related problems faced by clients, the problem is often textually juxtaposed with the overall positive general assistance that IOM provides. For example, Mr J’s business failed, but the narrative employs a framed direct quotation to demonstrate he is still grateful for IOM’s initial support:

Excerpt 14: Mr J, Afghanistan:

Mr. J returned from the UK to Afghanistan in July 2005. He is an educated man with two years’ working experience in the Photography business. Upon his return, he approached IOM for assistance and soon decided to re-start his former business in his birth place in the Maidan Wardak Province. This was not an easy task for him as he had to find a good business location and his idea was not supported by the elders and the religious scholars of the village. Despite this opposition, Mr. J managed to start his photography shop with IOM’s assistance in August 2005. Unfortunately, he had to stop his activities at the beginning of 2006 due to a lack of customers. In June 2006, Mr. J revised his business idea,

met a fuel station owner and asked to be employed in his business. He was required to invest 2000 US dollars through buying a digital fuel pump in exchange of 25% of the monthly net profit. Mr. J decided to go ahead with this business partnership. During a visit in November 2006, he thanked IOM “at least I had IOM’s support to help me do any business that I think is the best for me”.

(page 25 of publication, appendix 2a)

The use of “at least” in excerpt 21 signals a contrast pair (Smith 1978), contrasting the problems he encountered upon return with the positive support from IOM. And although the obstacles were sizeable, the return is still balanced with a positive statement about the institution, suggesting the situation could have been worse without IOM, thereby justifying its involvement. Furthermore, despite IOM’s best efforts, it is other problems (the opposition from the elders) which are represented as causing the business to fail.

By largely focusing on the topic of economic practicalities, readers are encouraged to evaluate the success of the return in terms of the business alone (and whether the programme can support the individual to earn a sustainable income), rather than on whether the decision was the right one. By predominantly including obstacles related to business set-up, the accounts become problem/solution narratives and encourage the reader to consider the utility of the programme, increasing the credibility of the narratives (but not appearing overly positive) while also representing clients as industrious and – importantly – active (and agentic) in their ability to overcome problems. This foregrounding of business problems perhaps reflects what Georgi describes as “IOM’s professed apolitical, managerial values of efficiency, professionalism and entrepreneurship. Migration is mostly presented as a technical problem, a challenge – not as a political topic associated with power struggles and diverging interests” (2012:64), addressed again in chapter 7.

Positive self-praise is evident in the use of constructed dialogue (Tannen 1989:111) in IOM’s *Stories of Return*, in which framed direct quotes (Ravotas and Berkenkotter 1998) are employed to express clients’ gratitude to IOM and their approval of IOM’s manner of assistance and help to return. These often occur at the end of the narrative, ending on a prominent, positive note and positioned as to sum up the programme as a whole. The institutional use of constructed dialogue is strategic: the voice of the client is recruited to verify the institution’s expertise and justify its involvement in the return process. It is the

client's authoritative voice which speaks so positively of the institution (who better to know about the return experience than the client themselves?). Client recommendation is evident in the following example, which occurs at the end of Mr M's narrative:

Excerpt 15: Mr M, Ethiopia:

He is now running a Photocopy and Internet shop during his spare time. "I have found the program good and it enabled me to have my own business".

(page 17 of publication, appendix 2a)

Once again this framed direct quote – ostensibly from the client – evaluates the programme positively ("good"), implicitly recommending it and adding credibility to the narrative. Mr M's direct quote accounts for IOM's involvement in the AVR programme by confirming the programme has achieved explicitly what it aims to (help people set up businesses).

Mr K's narrative also contributes to IOM's positive self-presentation via constructed dialogue. His business is represented as having closed shortly after returning:

Excerpt 16: Mr K, Afghanistan:

"Security is the general problem of all Afghans, especially, in southern areas of Afghanistan. I am happy that I returned to my country through IOM's orderly and managed programme, but the fact that I had to leave was very unpleasant for me."

(page 24 of publication, appendix 2a)

Within this framed direct quote the rhetorical device of script formulation (Edwards 1994) categorises Mr K's problems with security as routine ("the general problem of all Afghans"). This rare inclusion of security issues in the *AVR Stories of Return* categorises Mr K's problem as a problem for *all* clients returning to Afghanistan, naturalising the difficulties Mr K had as typical and distancing these problems from the responsibility of IOM. This ostensibly direct quote represents Mr K as happy to be in "my country", with belonging there foregrounded by the possessive pronoun "my". Despite the challenges, Mr K's emigration is also evaluated negatively ("but the fact that I had to leave was very unpleasant for me"), abnormalising his period of time away and naturalising his return.

The use of “orderly and managed” in Mr K’s narrative echoes IOM’s description of its programmes in promotional texts. It is a recurrence (Wodak 1997) of the institutional lexical item “orderly” from the often-used sentence “a dignified and orderly return to your home country” (page 2, appendix 1a). The client’s mirroring of the institutional voice serves to reinforce IOM’s position as ‘expert’ and being powerful in its ability to impose order on an otherwise implicitly disordered migratory journey. The inclusion of this institutionalised lexical recurrence in the client’s narrative contributes to IOM’s positive self-presentation as expert in managed migration.

IOM also accounts for its AVR programmes through its focus on the topic of the sustainability of the business and the economic benefits of return for the *country of origin*. This also relates to Georgi’s (2012:56) argument that IOM considers migration as ‘beneficial to all’ if it is *economically* beneficial. This justification strategy is overt in Mr D’s narrative where his business is explicitly linked to the country’s economy and infrastructure:

Excerpt 17: Mr D, Iraq:

He believes that with this business he can play a great role in promoting the agricultural infrastructure of his country.

(page 27 of publication, appendix 2a)

Using Ravotas and Berkenkotter’s (1998) coding categories for constructed dialogue, this can be considered a propositional attitude frame, which is where a verb conveying speech is substituted for a verb which conveys the quoted speaker’s thought. The use of propositional attitude frame signals that the author of this narrative is “summarising, glossing” (Heritage 1985:100) or paraphrasing the client’s speech; the use of the verb *believe* expresses modality, distancing the institution from the truth of whether they will contribute to the economy. In this way, this topic is raised and the client is formulated as concerned about it without the institution (or client) committing to its truth.

Measuring the success of the client’s return in terms of how many jobs it has created is evident in a further 14 (out of 74) narratives in the IOM *Stories of Return* booklet. The extent of the clients’ contribution to the *local economy* appears to be an

important aspect in the evaluation of the success of the reintegration assistance, and can be considered as making a 'human capital' argument (Blitz *et al.* 2007), where AVR is motivated by the interests of the country of origin. This focus on the wider benefits of AVR for the local economy justifies AVR, yet may be also appealing to government representatives – who may be considered as 'over-hearers' in Bell's audience design framework (Bell 2009) of these *Stories of Return*. The knowledge and economic potential of each client is seen as a key motivation for other governments to support AVR, with AVR programmes useful in their ability to counter the negative effects of the emigration of trained or qualified people (known as 'brain drain'). It is also positive for IOM, and the UK government in that it demonstrates the benefits of AVR to the government of the country of origin (creation of new wealth), orienting to the political need to please the country of origin. This is important as countries of origin may at times be reticent to receive exiled citizens (whose asylum claims may have been rejected).

The *Stories of Return* publication is used as a vehicle for the clients (imbued with the authority of recent experience) to recommend the programmes. IOM recruits the clients' voices (and reported beliefs) to construct a positive self-presentation of the institution, making clear use of the clients' voice as a "mechanism for the construction of institutional authority" (Park and Bucholtz, 2009:485).

In summary, we have seen that IOM characteristically accounts for its AVR programmes by foregrounding its expertise in migration management, achieved through a combination of different rhetorical-discursive devices. This effort to account for AVR in this way appears to be orienting to various audiences – the client, potential client or partner agency – but also to the funders in accounting for the success of the programmes.

In reference to IOM's work in the government of borders, Andrijasevic and Walters discuss how IOM have made borders "a particular terrain of expert intervention" (2010:10). Arguably IOM also do this with AVR, in part through these narratives. In strategically foregrounding their expertise and their ability to solve problems related to business start-up through the narratives, IOM potentially bolsters its reputation internationally as an expert in this field, justifying its involvement in other 'migration management' projects and positioning itself for future migration-based contracts. These *Stories of Return* then become a marketing tool for the organisation, rather than a preparatory tool for clients.

The following section, however, examines how the manner in which IOM ‘accounts’ for AVR (focusing on the business start-up aspects) may contribute to the representation of the *voluntariness* of AVR.

Examining representations of voluntariness in IOM’s Stories of Return through ‘event work’

Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* in their Rhetorical Discourse Analysis framework argue that strategies of describing events “are effective in managing accountability” (2011a:71), identifying this as ‘event work’. Event work is evident in the texts in how the AVR programmes are formulated as voluntary and non-coercive in IOM’s *Stories of Return* booklet by delineating where the narratives begin. Due to the focus on the reintegration assistance (as evidenced above), the period prior to return has been omitted in what Fairclough refers to as being filtered by the recontextualising principle of “presence” (2003:139).

The majority (63 of 74) of IOM narratives begin the story at the date when the client arrives back in the country of origin or the date they set up their business, giving no detail prior to this date. Mr W’s narrative, below, is typical, with it beginning “After his return”, in line 3:

Excerpt 18: from IOM’s Stories of Return: Mr W, Uganda:

1	Uganda, Kampala
2	Hostel
3	After his return to Kampala in
4	June 2004, Mr. W started a pine
5	tree nursery project. He discovered
6	that to make a profit from this
7	activity he would have had to
8	keep his production costs down by
9	operating on a larger scale.
10	He therefore decided not to plant
11	more trees but use the money
12	he had already earned from the
13	trees to convert his mother’s
14	house into a hostel with three
15	rooms available to rent. Although
16	he struggles to make ends meet
17	in other ways, the business is
18	profitable and he employs two

19	people. Mr. W has a strong
20	interest in nature and is thinking
21	of starting a project on HIV and
22	forestation in the near future.

(page 14 of publication, appendix 2a)

This is a common pattern with other IOM narratives (e.g. see also in appendix 2a, Mr F, p.15; Mrs F, p.15, Mr. N, p.15; Mrs C., p.16; Mrs G, p.17; Mr, O, p.18; Ms A, p.19; Ms N, p.19; Mr C, p.20; Ms N, p.20; Mr P, p.21; Ms T, p.23). Some IOM narratives do specify how long the client was in the UK, although this is the extent of the detail. For example, Mr O's narrative begins:

Excerpt 19: Mr O, Nigeria:

Mr. O returned to Nigeria in September 2004 after spending a little over a year in the UK.

(page 18 of publication, appendix 2a)

(see also publication in appendix 2a: Mr and Mrs L, p.16; Mr M, p.16; Mr M, p.17; Mr T, p.17, Mr X, p.18; Mr O, p.18; Mr S, p.19; Mr D, p.20; Mr X, p.21; Ms M, p.22; Ms X, p.22). Out of the 74 narratives in the booklet, 63 narratives make no mention of life in the UK (except for the length of time spent here) or the client's decision to return, and only 11 IOM narratives include some information about the decision to return or life in the UK. It is helpful to consider these narratives in how they represent the push and pull factors of the decision to return. To explain these terms, push factors are those which compel people to migrate from the country (e.g. destitution, racism, end of asylum claim); pull factors are those which attract people to migrate to the destination country (e.g. family reunion, political stability). Out of these four narratives (e.g. Mr D, p. 20) cite family reunion as the reason for return (pull-factor); two (e.g. Mr C. p. 34) mention the benefits of the VARRP programme as the incentive for return (pull-factor); three (e.g. Ms G, p.35) give their poor standard of living (push-factor) as the reason for their return; only two (e.g. Mr A, p.33) cite their limited immigration status (push-factor) as the reason for return. So out of the 74 narratives, only five include push factors.

Omission of life before the date clients return in the narrative avoids representations of the client as having little choice and the decision being difficult, or the return as being 'mandatory' (according the ECRE's definition) rather than voluntary. This depoliticises AVR, denying the individual's interests. This allows IOM to use the *Stories of Return* to display its expertise and the success of the reintegration fund.

In contrast to IOM, which very rarely uses the narratives to examine the client's decision to return, Refugee Action explicitly state this as the focus of its narratives. Below I demonstrate how rhetorical devices are employed to account for the individual client's decision to return; I then consider how this accounting work contributes to a construction of voluntariness.

4.4.2 Refugee Action *Stories of Return* (2013): a focus on the decision to return

As outlined in section 4.2, the Refugee Action *Stories of Return* are addressed directly to potential and current clients. Refugee Action frames the narratives from the outset as stories of family reunion and return 'home' in the online introduction, where the audience is informed that by reading these narratives we can "[f]ind out how it was for them [clients] to make the decision to go and the emotional impact of arriving home and being reunited with family" (Refugee Action, p.1, appendix 2b). This contrasts with the IOM *Stories of Return*, which are introduced as accounts about how reintegration assistance was used by clients.

In accounting for the client's individual decision to return, rhetorical devices are employed in Refugee Action's narratives which justify the individual's decision as, although difficult, positive for them in their particular circumstances. In this way, Refugee Action orients to criticisms about AVR and addresses questions regarding the voluntariness, but shows that for some people the programmes are useful regardless of their limited options in the UK. Refugee Action accounts for a different aspect of AVR to IOM. IOM does not orient to criticisms; instead it focuses on its expertise in being able to offer these programmes.

A prominent micro-theme in Refugee Action's narratives employed in weighing up the decision to return is (the importance of) family reunion, and is explicitly stated as the

key motivation for deciding to return for some individuals (see Salar, Nebez, Sitheni, appendix 2b). Family reunion as an aspect of return is evident in Rebwar's narrative, which, although acknowledging the push factor of a rejected asylum claim, explicitly cites the "main" reason for return as his mother's illness:

Excerpt 20: Rebwar, Iraq:

After living in the UK for four years, one reason Rebwar decided to return to Iraq was that his asylum claim was refused. However, the main reason that he did not hesitate to apply to go home was that his mother was very ill. She was in a coma and he thought she might be dying.

(story 12, appendix 2b)

Under the subheading of 'Arrival', constructed dialogue is used to represent Jacob's feelings upon arrival, where he refers to family reunion. Although this is not the reason for his return, it justifies his decision as the right one:

Excerpt 21: Jacob, Zimbabwe:

"My kids are a priority. They have settled in very well [in Zimbabwe]...My family in Zimbabwe are happy – nobody likes it when family members are away." Jacob

(story 1, appendix 2b)

The institution formulates this constructed dialogue, in the form of a framed direct quote, as important by employing it in a 'pull quote' at the beginning of his narrative under a photo representing the client. The institution's positioning of this repeated text at the beginning of the narrative foregrounds this as a motive for Jacob to return. The photo authenticates the narrative and (potentially) increases its credibility. This ostensibly direct speech from the client frames the narrative as a tale of family reunion and belonging from the outset, supporting the decision to return by evaluating his desire to reunite with family as right. The recruiting of Jacob's voice can be regarded as a type *role model authority* (as proposed by van Leeuwen (2007) as a legitimization strategy), in that the individual may be perceived or presented as members of a broad category of people (nationals who have

experienced the asylum process in the UK and are now contemplating return). This recruitment of Jacob's wider family's voice within the constructed dialogue also contributes to justifying the decision, in which return is represented as something everybody supports ("nobody..."), abnormalising being away, and normalising return. The family members are included in an 'unframed non-explicit description' (Ravotas and Berkenkotter 1998), including an opinion without allocating it to a specific person. In this way Jacob's voice is very forceful in its ability to justify his decision to return and, as a consequence, the existence of AVR as a whole.

Although Refugee Action's *Stories of Return* do also address business-related issues, it is the way that Refugee Action justifies the decision to return by foregrounding the importance of family reunion which is particularly forceful in its narratives, and which is achieved through of combination of rhetorical devices.

While both institutions foreground the voluntariness of AVR in their leaflets as a means of justifying the AVR programmes (as established in section 4.2.1), due to their differing accounting work in the *Stories of Return* (as evidenced above), the institutions construct the *voluntariness* of return differently.

Examining representations of voluntariness in Refugee Action's Stories of Return through 'event work'

Although Refugee Action clearly represents its AVR programmes as independent of the government, non-coercive, and hence voluntary in the leaflet (as already shown in section 4.4.2), in contrast to IOM's *Stories of Return* (as shown in section 4.4.1), Refugee Action represents the *context* for the decision to apply for AVR in a more nuanced way. Refugee Action provides greater detail regarding the clients' situation and factors that will affect their decision-making process. As will be discussed below, the different approaches to the description of return ('event work' in RDA terms) can be attributed to differing institutional parameters and roles, resulting in a different construction of the term 'voluntary' for each set of stories.

Refugee Action has explicitly structured each client's return narrative into sections under the following regular headings:

- *Life in the UK or Background information*
- *The decision to go*
- (- *Preparing for return*)
- *Arrival*
- (- *Plans and hopes for the future*)
- (- *Choices local partner*)

Not all of the headings are employed in each narrative (those in brackets are at times omitted). The institutional structuring of the narratives into these headings allows for an entextualisation of the return experience in which narratives can end on a positive due to the final section treating 'Plans and hopes for the future'. This structuring by the institution also ensures that elements of the client's background situation are included (for example, any push or pull factors), and the inclusion of the 'decision to go' foregrounds this aspect of the return process as a key stage. This differs to IOM's *Stories of Return* narratives, which include very little information prior to the return (as discussed in section 4.4.1).

While IOM's narratives rarely raise the topic of the decision to return, Refugee Action's *Stories of Return* (Appendix 2b) explicitly address the decision-making element of the return process and clients' experiences in the UK prior to return. In this sense, the 'complicating actions' (Labov and Waletzky 1967:12) in Refugee Action's narratives are related largely to the *decision to return* and as such are varied, including issues to do with push and pull factors, e.g. related to security, family reunion or job prospects. This differs to the IOM narratives examined above, where the complicating action is broadly related to the technical aspects of starting up a business.

Each Refugee Action narrative begins with either a section called "Life in the UK" or "Background information", giving details about the clients' experience before return. In this way – and differing to this particular publication from IOM – Refugee Action in these narratives, invites the reader to consider the context of the decision to return.

In fact, 11 out of the 15 narratives also include the clients' reason for migrating to the UK in the first place, therefore beginning the story much earlier than IOM's

publication. For example, as we can see in excerpt 22 below, Nebez's narrative begins by including the reason Nebez came to the UK (lines 4-5):

Excerpt 22: from Refugee Action's Stories of Return: Nebez, Iraq:

1 **Nebez – Iraqi**

2 **Kurdistan**

3 **Background information**

4 Nebez came to the UK six years ago because he had a lot of problems with
5 another family where he lived and he was in danger. He claimed asylum when
6 he came to the UK but his claim was rejected more than once. "I became so
7 tired of it and I missed my family so much," he said. "I thought I would be more
8 content if I returned home."

9 **The decision to go**

10 Nebez was scared before returning home. He felt that six years had been a long
11 time to be away. However he missed his family. "I learnt English and thought
12 this would help me coming home, because I can speak more than one
13 language. I heard about Choices and the caseworker was very good to me.
14 They told me about the financial assistance I was entitled to under the
15 Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) which was
16 up to £1500," Nebez said.

17 [presented on website as pull-quote]

18 "I heard about Choices and the caseworker was very good to me.

19 They told me about the financial assistance I was entitled to which
20 was up to £1500." *Nebez* [end of pull-quote]

20 **Preparing to return**

21 Once Nebez had decided to return, his caseworker helped him to plan how he
22 might find work in Iraq. "I thought my caseworker was a good person. He told
23 me everything I needed to know to go back, said Nebez. "I found the process at
24 the UK airport quite easy. I was given a start card with some of the money on it
25 and told what I was to expect going through the airports."

26 **Arrival**

27 "My brother and my friends were there to meet me. That was great," said
28 Nebez. He was happy to be home and discovered that much has changed in
29 Kurdistan since he left. A lot of the problems he had before aren't problems
30 anymore. However, he has found it difficult to find a job. He has had a temporary
31 job, but would like a more permanent and stable job in the future.

32 **Plans and hopes for the future**

33 So far Nebez has spent the money he has received on rent but he hopes he
34 can find a job and buy a house. He is also planning to marry. He said: "I am
35 living with my brother and I feel happy. I want to build a new life."

36 **Choices partners in Iraq**

37 The partner agency in Iraq is Qandil, a Swedish non-governmental development
38 organisation.

(story 11, appendix 2b)

In lines 5-6, we learn that Nebez's asylum application has been rejected twice. We can infer then that he might be classified by the Home Office as 'Appeal Rights Exhausted' (ARE), meaning he is unlikely to be able to remain in the UK legally, and hence potentially faces removal directions from the UK government. In contrast to the framing of return as voluntary in the title and general AVR written material, Refugee Action narratives add context to this term, negotiating a very limited meaning of the term 'voluntary' in which the client has a very restricted choice to make of whether they apply for AVR or not. Out of the 15 narratives, only one narrative – that of James from Nigeria (story 9, appendix 2b) – does not include a push-factor. The remaining narratives all include one or more push factor influencing their decision to return. For example:

Excerpt 23: Enam, Ghana:

1. Life in the UK

2. *Enam sought asylum in the UK but his application was refused. He was detained in*
3. *an immigration removal centre where he found information about the Choices*
4. *service.*

5. The decision to go

6. *"I decided I had to go home because I wanted to make my life better" says Enam.*

(story 14, appendix 2b)

By including the information that the client was "detained in an immigration removal centre" (lines 2-3) Refugee Action demonstrate that he was likely to be deported by the Home Office or, if not, may remain in detention. This narrative then represents his choice as either being detained and eventually deported, or 'choosing' to return under AVR. These 'push factors', the background context from the UK, are then weighed up against the 'pull factors' of return.

From analysing where the story (or the ‘event’ of return) begins, we can see how Refugee Action, in these particular narratives, chooses to include more information and background to the clients’ decision to return, thus representing return still as voluntary (as IOM does) but taking place within a context of pressures, in effect politicising the process. Although both institutions also represent the pull-factors (wanting to be ‘home’, reuniting with family, the best interests of the children), it is how they deal with the push-factors that differentiates their approach in these narratives in the main.

It may seem logical that IOM would not discuss the decision-making process as it had no involvement in this area of the AVR process. As discussed in section 1.1, clients who were considering but were unsure about return during IOM’s period of administration were signposted to the Refugee Action Choices team, which aimed to explore all clients’ options with them. Since Refugee Action took over the AVR programmes they have advised clients through the *whole* process. Therefore we may anticipate that the decision-making process would feature in Refugee Action’s narratives as it is (and has long been) part of their workload. Although the case, the context of this institutional division of labour may not, understandably, be accessible to the reader. As a result, these IOM *Stories of Return* construct the journey of return as a process where the push-factors are represented as unimportant to the client’s return narrative. In contrast, by beginning the narratives in the UK, Refugee Action indirectly references their own work in supporting refugees and asylum seekers through the difficulties of life in the UK (historically an important area of their work and expertise). Refugee Action implies there are problems with using the term ‘voluntary’ in this context, politicising the topic of return migration as well as the programmes.

Further examples of Refugee Action placing these narratives within the political context and orienting to issues within the wider asylum process is evident in Akram’s narrative. For example, Refugee Action state:

Excerpt 24: Akram, India:

Background information

Akram came to the UK in 2004, where he claimed asylum. He was refused and, although he had a science degree in computer technology, legally he was not permitted to work.*

The use of “although” implies that perhaps Akram should have been able to contribute to life in the UK as he was educated, but was not allowed to due to government policy. As well as reflecting Refugee Action’s wider discursive strategy of politicising AVR programmes and representing their campaigning stance, this negative aspect of life in the UK may also function as a means of promoting trust (Bourne 2013:171) by displaying empathy with clients’ challenging situation and therefore affiliating with AVR clients.

By analysing how the use of rhetorical devices in the institutions’ AVR leaflets can represent social actors in certain ways (active, passive, independent...) we have seen how the ‘voluntariness’ of return can be constructed, and therefore how AVR is justified in this manner. We have also been able to consider how the meaning of ‘voluntary’ is situated (Gee 2005:53) – constructed and problematised – via ‘event work’ or “methods of describing events” (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a:71), depending on the publication itself and the institutional approach.

4.5 Chapter summary

Through the analysis of rhetorical devices within the AVR leaflets and these entextualisations of clients’ return experiences (the *Stories of Return*), we can see how the texts orient to specific accusations over the voluntary nature of AVR (and hence to trust issues), while also providing ways of imbuing the institutions with authority and expertise regarding this return migration journey, accounting for their involvement and the clients’ decision to return. In constructing “preferred meanings for problematic events” (Buttny 1993:21), IOM and Refugee Action account for AVR in different ways. Through the theme of *expertise and support* IOM takes a practical approach, and accounts for its ability to carry out the work; Refugee Action defends its involvement in AVR through the *decision to return* theme by accounting for, or explaining, each individual’s decision.

In examining the representation of social actors, van Leeuwen encourages us to consider “what purposes are achieved” (1996:43) by such representations. In using these

analytic frameworks to examine IOM and Refugee Action texts, I have made visible the “politically and ideologically salient features” (Jaworski and Coupland 2009:474) which construct power relations within AVR. This leads us to a key tension in AVR discourse: that of the ideological motivations for AVR and how they are represented. Blitz *et al.*’s (2005) findings that AVR is promoted with human-capital and justice-based arguments/motivations is partly supported here. Justice-based arguments are prevalent in both institutions’ publications where return is represented as a natural conclusion to the client’s time in the UK or, as Black and Koser (1999) describe it, the end of the refugee cycle. IOM’s exclusion of the push factors of return in this publication also categorises its argument as justice-based, as it relies on an un-complicated notion of voluntary. However, Refugee Action’s inclusion of the context of the decision to return makes a ‘humanitarian argument’ (in which it is concerned with individual’s welfare): although the pressures of the context – and the individual’s limited power – are acknowledged, AVR has been on balance positive for them. The analysis further shows that the human-capital argument is implicit in IOM’s *Stories of Return*. However the burden-relieving argument – although implicit in IOM’s institutional tagline (discussed in 4.2.1) – is unsurprisingly rare in these AVR texts. Blitz *et al.* argue that AVR is often promoted with human-capital and justice-based arguments, but the policies behind the programmes are made with burden-relieving arguments. Through an examination of accounting work in these specific institutional texts, it is possible to conclude that AVR is promoted by IOM on the whole with justice-based, and human-capital arguments. Refugee Action, however, employ justice-based, but add humanitarian-based arguments.

These multiple motivations result from AVR occupying a liminal (and “contested” McGhee and Bennett, 2014a) space between two large social systems: that of refugee protection and migration control. As Geiger and Pécoud argue, the concept of *managed migration* shifts “control modalities from the ‘law and order’ to other social spheres” (2012:18). People who have claimed asylum, while their asylum application is still open, are within the refugee protection system. Once their asylum claim is rejected by the Home Office or they withdraw it (as they are obliged to do once they sign up to AVR), they fall within the government’s migration control system. However, the representation of social actors, and the lexicalisation of AVR programmes with borrowings from *humanitarianism*,

continues to frame return as within the refugee protection system, or even the field of international development. Geiger and Pécoud (2012:18) argue that this contributes to the depoliticisation of AVR and decisions made within it. Along with the foregrounding of the voluntariness of AVR (as discussed in section 4.3), these discursive processes deny the existence of power asymmetries between actors within the process and the involvement of any coercive or migration control element.

The analysis has demonstrated how clients' experiences of return migration – and in particular the obstacles they face upon return – have been entextualised to fit within a specific institutional narrative structure. This has resulted in the IOM publication effectively depoliticising the process, while the Refugee Action narratives politicise it by representing AVR as potentially the best of a few limited options given the context.

In its *Stories of Return*, Refugee Action implicitly acknowledge Andrijasevic and Walters' claim that "'voluntary' does not stand for whether a migrant has been deported willingly or not but rather for the organizational modality of the AVR programmes" (2010:22). Refugee Action shows that the context effectively forces some people to return, but foregrounds its own AVR advice as non-directive.

Georgi characterises IOM as viewing migration as a technical issue, devoid of "power struggles and diverging interests" (2012:64); similarly Andrijasevic and Walters argue that IOM orients to borders and mobility as "primarily a problem of management" (2010:24). By examining IOM's *Stories of Return*, the organisation's focus on the technicalities of migration is evident here too. IOM's foregrounding of the details and technical management of the difficulties of starting a business upon return are prioritised in its narratives. This avoids the complexities of return and the individual context of clients' decision, represented to some degree in Refugee Action's narratives.

IOM's foregrounding of the topic of clients' experiences of economic reintegration – and backgrounding of other issues (e.g. security, family, psycho-social issues) – represents return as, on the whole, 'successful' and reintegration as 'complete' once the funds have been received and spent. The focus on the impact of the financial assistance may seem the most obvious and straightforward way to account for AVR, yet it neglects the other needs/concerns of people returning, affecting the potential of the publications

to function as preparatory tools (as they are used by some caseworkers – see section 4.2). By foregrounding aspects of business set-up (to the exclusion of most other issues), there is a risk that the possible difficulties of return could potentially be obscured. The selection of business start-up as the focus of IOM's narratives is an aspect which Isabel, a caseworker from IOM, negatively evaluates:

“...I think not everybody is an entrepreneur... and I think people are always guided into the business option and I think maybe even IOM's partly responsible for that because it's what we use in our *Stories of Return* it's what we talk about in the reintegration counselling...”

(lines 496-497, page 135, appendix 6c).

Ambiguities in the AVR leaflets due to the (presumably intentional) omission of the financial role of the Home Office also risk inadvertently blurring distinctions of roles and responsibilities in the wider process. The exclusion of the Home Office, amongst other discursive devices, also reflects the institutions' desire to create a project that is independent from the government and its agenda; yet this key omission results in a depoliticisation (to differing degrees depending on institution and text) of the return process, denying the power asymmetries inherent in the AVR process.

The manner in which the institutions account for AVR may further contribute to clients' credibility problems with the institutions, particularly in light of the specific trust problems discussed in section 1.4.2. For example, the continual promotion of return as voluntary, although notably countered in Refugee Action's *Stories of Return*, may contradict the reason why a client is applying for AVR. Similarly, the agency allocated to clients by the institutions in these AVR materials may lack credibility, particularly given the absence of agency reportedly felt by some clients (as discussed in section 1.4.2). Although the use of the term 'voluntary' can be seen to be inappropriate for many clients (considering the context of their application), the analysis shows that constructions of voluntariness in terms of clients' agency permeate the texts, which could potentially therefore actively undermine the institutions' central 'trust building' agendas. However, as Koch argues regarding IOM, “[g]iven that states approach the IOM in order to find an alternative to deportation, the label ‘voluntary return’ constitutes a unique selling point that the agency is unwilling to give up and eager to develop even further” (2013:8).”

Having examined how IOM and Refugee Action account for AVR through four institutional texts, the following chapter turns to research interview data. An analysis of how caseworkers position themselves with regard to perceived institutional motivations of return – and the underlying ideologies – further evidences the contested space which AVR inhabits.

5. How do caseworkers position themselves relative to institutional ideologies?

5.1 Introduction

Caseworkers have indicated in interviews how aspects of the caseworker role can be rather mundane, or in Ana's words: "so so monotonous" (Ana, line 91, page 3, appendix 6c). However, as Mehan states, when examining the institutional construction of identities within educational settings, the mundane nature of the work "should not overshadow the drama of its importance" (2009:359). He rightly argues that bureaucratic practices can open and close access to educational opportunities, and therefore affect students' careers. Through the analysis in this chapter we can see how this observation applies to the context of AVR, where caseworkers' enactment of bureaucratic AVR practices may influence the AVR service provided, opening and closing AVR clients' access to particular information, support and opportunities, and therefore potentially shaping their lives upon return.

As discussed in the literature review, this chapter takes as a starting point Bucholtz and Hall's definition of identity as "the social positioning of self and other" (2005:586), regarding caseworkers' identification practices examined here as locally situated, and dialogic. In their influential paper, Davies and Harré define positioning as "the discursive production of a diversity of selves" (1990:47), and distinguish *reflexive* positioning (which occurs when someone positions themselves), from *interactive* positioning (which occurs when someone positions another).

Just as the institutions 'account' for return through their written AVR material (examined in chapter 4), I regard caseworkers' discussions of their day-to-day tasks as doing 'accounting work', in orienting to perceived controversial aspects, the multiple agendas behind AVR, and in explaining their work practices. Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* include under 'accounts', "...the persuasive dimension of language-use, the construction of preferred meanings and the disagreement over descriptions" (2011a:57). The fundamental disagreements over the ideological underpinnings and drivers of AVR, therefore frames this talk-in-interaction (and AVR literature) as doing accounting work.

Although this analysis focuses on the construction of *professional* identities of staff in the interview data, it is acknowledged that, as Holmes, Stubbe and Vine state in their examination of constructing identity in policy units, “other aspects of [professionals’] identity are simultaneously being enacted and could equally be the focus of study” (1999:353).

This chapter is divided into three sections, with each section addressing salient themes through which the caseworkers negotiate their occupational identities and the responsibilities of their work with regard to perceived institutional agendas. The analysis focuses on the linguistic devices identified by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) in positioning, combined with other linguistic means which contribute to identity construction, such as narrative and rhetorical-discursive devices (discussed in section 2.3). The chapter is divided as follows:

- The first section explores how caseworkers position themselves regarding the ‘**voluntariness**’ of the AVR programmes, examining how this positioning challenges the validity of institutional power representations in the use of the label ‘voluntary’. I also focus on the strategic use of constructed dialogue (Tannen 1989) and narrative (Schrauf 2000), as used to account for (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a) the reported “dirty work” (Dick 2005) of AVR, and address threats to social identity.
- The second section analyses how caseworkers position themselves with regard to the perceived wider **ideological motives behind the programmes**, aligning with and distancing from Home Office and institutional agendas, and accounting for and repairing perceived threats to social identity. In doing so, I examine the use of rhetorical devices (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a) such as pronouns, categorisation, modalisation, and constructed dialogue.
- The final section explores how caseworkers construct professional identities through the interpretative repertoires (Wetherell and Potter 1988) of **client advocate** and **institutional gatekeeper**, challenging and maintaining institutional power dimensions.

I conclude by considering what effect caseworkers’ positioning may have on institutional-client power dimensions, and how these differing positions and professional identities have the potential to shape service provision for clients.

In the first section, by taking a closer look at the widely reported issue of voluntariness within AVR (discussed in section 4.2), we shall see how staff, having oriented

to the issue and problematised the term 'voluntary', discursively position themselves with regard to this controversial aspect.

5.2 Staff negotiating topic of 'voluntariness'

Caseworkers from both IOM and Refugee Action acknowledge that not all the AVR clients really wish to return. Most often this is acknowledged implicitly, though sometimes it is baldly stated, for example Janice, in responding to my question "if you could change three things about the process as a whole – the AVR process – what would they be", answered, "I would take out the word voluntary cos I find it kind of patronising a lot of the time and difficult to sort of deal with people who were coming and they obviously didn't really want to go home they had no other option" (Janice, lines 624-627, page 151, appendix 6c). However voluntariness is addressed, it is always raised by the caseworkers themselves, indicating perhaps the centrality of the issue for staff. Caseworkers' perception that some clients do not wish to return is at odds with how the programmes are promoted in AVR literature (as examined in chapter 4). In this way, caseworkers challenge institutionally-represented power dynamics that all clients have the agency and freedom to make this decision to return. Yet even though caseworkers contest just how voluntary the programmes are for some clients, they positively evaluate the programmes for those clients who they perceive as truly wanting to return: the AVR programmes are of course beneficial for these clients. This raising of the problem of voluntariness and subsequent refocusing onto the non-stigmatised aspects of their role (i.e. helping people who *do* want to go back) is typical of staff in occupations which may be perceived by some as doing 'dirty work'. Research on 'dirty work' builds on Hughes' (1958) definition of the term as tasks which are tainted either: "physically, socially or morally" (1958:122). Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), after researching stereotypes of occupational roles, refined each of Hughes' categorisations. They argue that moral taint occurs where:

"an occupation is generally regarded as somewhat sinful or of dubious virtue (e.g., exotic dancer, pawnbroker, tattoo artist, psychic, casino manager) or where the worker is thought to employ methods that are deceptive, intrusive, confrontational, or that

otherwise defy norms of civility (e.g., bill collector, tabloid reporter, telemarketer, private investigator, police interrogator).” (1999: 415).

AVR can be seen to be *perceived* as morally tainted because the organisations are characterised by some to employ methods which are “deceptive”, in that they are funded by the government and therefore perceived as motivated by migration control agendas, while they represent themselves as assisting migrants who wish to voluntarily return ‘home’. This perception of taint is most clearly evidenced when, for example, Refugee Action’s involvement in AVR is described as “legitimis[ing] unacceptable policies” (Webber 2012:97) of the Home Office. Webber had earlier criticised Refugee Action’s involvement in counselling AVR applicants (before it took on the whole AVR project) in a 2010 political blog in which she claims that Refugee Action’s “association with UKBA and the IOM means that the information it provides, however impartial, is likely to be viewed as suspect” (page 340, in appendix 7c). This taint is also evident in a comment from the ex-CEO of Refugee Action, Dave Garrett, on the blog to reject accusations of Refugee Action’s role as “a nosegay” (page 343, in appendix 7c) legitimising Home Office policy. The perception of IOM AVR programmes as deceptive is again evident in a later comment on this blog, ostensibly from an AVRIM client, claiming to be “a victim of this deception”, describing AVR as a “back door deportation set-up” and a “HOAX” (page 343, appendix 7c). This taint is further evidenced in IOM’s head-on rejection of its role as a “government travel agency” (e.g. Reconnect Africa 2007) in outreach presentations and interviews with communications staff. It is also evident in the claim that the organisations persuade people to return to meet government immigration targets, e.g. when journalists report on the programmes. The Telegraph for example describes the programmes as “designed to persuade failed asylum seekers to return home in exchange for money” (2007).

Although not always explicitly acknowledged by each caseworker, this stigma is related through the focal theme of *voluntariness*. As Dick states, “[w]hen an occupation is morally tainted, that taint carries over to the identity of the role occupant” (2005:1368). In her analysis of how police officers account for their use of coercive force, Dick recognises variation across how individuals perceive what construes dirty work; however, “members of ‘tainted’ occupations will nevertheless be aware of how their activities and tasks are viewed by the wider public” (2005:1369).

In the following excerpt, Quinn, has been discussing how, in her experience, clients can be suspicious of AVR, relating this suspicion to Home Office rhetoric about migration. I ask her if this is one of the most frustrating aspects of her (principally outreach) work:

Excerpt 1: "...because some people do want to go back..."

Quinn, Refugee Action (appendix 6c)

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | Q | I think um (coughs) the main difficulty is yeah is gaining people's trust and yeah and |
| 2. | | that I and this - is difficult when someone er hears the message that you're saying when |
| 3. | | you're sorting of talking about Choices and AVR and they you can kind of tell that they're |
| 4. | | automatically assuming that you're with the Home Office or that you're somehow |
| 5. | | against them or don't don't care about their clients or somehow [K: OK] following the |
| 6. | | agenda of the Home Office whereas as an organisation we're definitely not you know |
| 7. | | we're independent we've always spoken out against the Home Office um: |
| 8. | | [3 lines omitted] |
| 9. | | but yeah that's a chal- it's also just a challenge to um just to talk about Assisted |
| 10. | | Voluntary Return with a lot of organisations because very rightfully [K: mm hm] they're |
| 11. | | very protective of their clients [K: OK] um: and a lot of people see return as er: really |
| 12. | | severe kind of anti you know almost inhumane thing like because a lot of people are you |
| 13. | | know have come from a really war torn place [K: mm] it's really dangerous so um even |
| 14. | | to think about return is they they consider it um you know something you shouldn't |
| 15. | | even think about but I guess [K: OK] we: we want to make sure that that everybody gets |
| 16. | | the message that this service exists and that it's client centred and impartial because |
| 17. | | <u>some</u> people do want to go back - whether or not a lot of people they don't feel it's a |
| 18. | | choice because the Home Office has asked them to leave - so it's: and we you know we |
| 19. | | understand that |

What is striking about how the caseworkers interviewed raise this topic of voluntariness is how consistent they are in conveying that many applicants *do not* wish to return: this is the backdrop against which they are working and constructing their professional identities. This 'norm' conflicts with the construction of 'voluntariness' in AVR promotional materials (discussed in chapter 4), and demonstrates the difficult position caseworkers occupy within the AVR programmes, mediating between institutional and government rhetoric and the perceived conflicting experiences of their clients. This is evident in the interview with Quinn in lines 17-19: "some people do want to go back whether or not a lot of people they don't feel it's a choice because the Home Office has asked them to leave", echoing George's (IOM) comment that AVR is a "last resort" (line

81, page 98, appendix 6c). The use of “some” creates the implicature that there is a lay assumption that most or at least *some* people do not want to go back, or if they do go back, they may feel coerced by the Home Office to do so. In lines 16-18, we can see how Quinn, like Refugee Action’s *Stories of Return* (discussed in 4.4), formulates ‘voluntary’ as having two aspects: voluntary in the sense that Refugee Action’s advice is impartial, and voluntary in the sense that clients are not coerced by the Home Office. Quinn successfully negotiates this problem of voluntariness, by foregrounding the impartial advice she provides (therefore upholding the first aspect), while acknowledging the power asymmetries inherent in the context of clients’ applications to AVR (therefore challenging the second aspect).

This normalisation of people *not* wanting to return is also evident in David’s response to my question asking “what three things in the AVR programme and AVR as a whole works really well”:

Excerpt 2: “...and if they want to leave...”

David, IOM (appendix 6c)

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | D | they are not humiliated [K: uhuh] and if they want to leave - if they are really |
| 2. | | eager to go that is the best way |

Here through the use of an intensifier in line 1 (“really”), David also implies that some people are not eager to leave, representing the desire to leave as a sliding scale, illustrating Rock’s (in press) claim that consent (in this case, to return) implies outcomes which are supported by varied enthusiasm. It is possible that David felt more able to acknowledge this issue around voluntariness with me, given our experience working together at IOM, with the interview therefore offering a type of ‘back region’ (Goffman 1981) (a private place where someone is able to ‘be themselves’), where he may assume that I consider voluntariness to be an issue. However, given that many caseworkers from both IOM and Refugee Action (some of whom I had only recently met) similarly oriented to this issue, it seems more likely that this is a ‘front region’ representation of the problem,

and that David (and others) considers this a lay presupposition that the general public (or at least those working within the wider sector) have about AVR. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) identify three ideological techniques that staff doing ‘dirty work’ use to “protect or bolster their identities in the face of the stigma posed by ‘dirty work’” (Dick 2005). Dick summarises these as:

- 1) Reframing: the meaning of the work/task is transformed
- 2) Recalibrating: tasks are re-categorised to emphasise palatable bits
- 3) Refocusing: there is a focus on the non-stigmatised aspects of the role (2005:1369)

In excerpt 1, Quinn refocuses onto the non-stigmatised aspect of her role – the fact that “some” people have valid reasons for wanting to return, and the impartiality and client-centredness of Refugee Action’s advice (line 16). Although in line 12 Quinn acknowledges the ‘dirty work’ aspect of AVR, when she recognises that some people categorise AVR as an “almost inhumane thing”, and that some people may feel coerced into return by the context created by government migration control (lines 18-19), she justifies the existence of AVR programmes for the few who *do* want to return. Sara, a caseworker from Refugee Action also orients to AVR being, for some clients, “their only option”, which she categorises as “challenging” (line 45, page 308, appendix 6c).

In the following excerpt from an interview with Ana from IOM, Ana orients to the topic of voluntariness in a response to a question regarding what she enjoys about her role:

Excerpt 3: “...and if they really want to go away...”

Ana, IOM (appendix 6c):

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | K | um: so: with your job here <u>now</u> – what do you most enjoy about it |
| 2. | A | um:? ((pause)) <u>dealing</u> with people actually |
| 3. | K | oh yeah= |
| 4. | A | =is – is like double sword ed er you know |
| 5. | K | [yeah |
| 6. | A | [double edge sword – it’s – it’s same time it’s <u>so</u> rewarding and nice? |
| 7. | K | yeah |
| 8. | A | and at the same time it’s sort of difficult and overwhelming – so: I really enjoy face |

- | | | |
|-------|---|--------|
| 9. | to face interaction with people | |
| 10. K | uhuh | |
| 11. A | from – all these different <u>cultures</u> with different you know <u>stories</u> <u>life</u> stories so it's | |
| 12. | always nice to get to know these people (()) in person | |
| 13. K | oh OK | |
| 14. A | so that's the actually the <u>most</u> I enjoy and if they <u>really</u> want to go away go go back | |
| 15. K | uhuh | |
| 16. A | instead of – um:: no choice | |
| 17. K | yeah | |
| 18. A | I <u>really</u> like at the <u>end</u> they always like 'oh <u>thank</u> you very much – <u>thank</u> <u>you</u> very | |
| 19. | much – o:h I'm going <u>back</u> I'm so happy' – <u>that</u> is really really the most [rewarding | |
| 20. | thing | |
| 21. K | | [oh OK |
| 22. A | I I <u>love</u> that one | |

That Ana orients to the topic of voluntariness (amongst others) when asked what she enjoys about her role, frames this issue as a negative and troubling aspect of her work. Ana is more explicit than other caseworkers: instead of just implying that some people do not want to return, (as she does in line 14), she explicitly states it in line 16 (“no choice”). In doing so she acknowledges that the programmes are not voluntary (in terms of a lack of government coercion) for everyone, implicitly negatively evaluating this as something she does not enjoy engaging with, and implicitly challenging the representation of return under AVR as voluntary. Like Quinn in excerpt 1, Ana after raising the topic of voluntariness, juxtaposes this aspect of having to assist people who have “no choice,” with the non-stigmatised aspect of her job. She refocuses (Dick 2005) onto the elements which she enjoys the most: helping those who *do* want to return.

Ana's strategic use of the client's constructed dialogue (Tannen 1989) in lines 18-19 increases facticity, and justifies her work on these programmes, bringing the client's positive emotions regarding return to life. In turn she positively evaluates her role, and protects or bolsters (Dick 2005) her social identity by representing the client as extremely grateful for her assistance. In her analysis of reported speech in storytelling, Holt argues that the inclusion of direct reported speech “enables the speaker to give an air of objectivity to the account” (1996:230). And in using clients' constructed dialogue, Ana ostensibly offers me, her interviewer, as well as (ultimately) the readers of this research, the opportunity to hear the speakers themselves, and for us to evaluate whether the programme is helpful/justified in providing assistance.

Repetition, prosodic stress and conversational styling through the discourse marker (Shiffrin 2006) “oh” in lines 18-19 in the client’s imagined speech serve to emphasise just how “happy” (line 19) clients can be to return, justifying AVR as whole. As Trester (2009) finds in her analysis of the discourse marker “oh” with constructed dialogue, “oh” functions here not only to mark a shift in footing (Goffman 1981), but also to “display and evaluate information presented through constructed dialogue” (Trester 2009:164). In his analysis of the context surrounding reported speech, Buttny argues that “prior and posterior statements contextually frame the reported speech to be heard in a certain way” (1998:55). The inclusion of “oh” directs us as to how to evaluate her client’s talk, and understand why she is quoting it, thus providing the contextualising information discussed by Buttny (1998). In this way, the client is represented as receiving new, surprising and welcome information that she can go back. Trester (2009:147) argues that the use of the discourse marker “oh” with constructed dialogue is a speaker identity resource, assisting the listener to understand the speaker’s position. The use of “oh” in this way, combined with the other linguistic devices noted above, positively reflects on the caseworker’s social identity, with the caseworker positively evaluating the client’s response. In line 22, Ana reiterates how much enjoyment she gets from helping people who want to return, positioning herself as providing help to those in need, refocusing as Dick (2005) describes, on non-stigmatised aspects of the job. Enjoying the role when clients are grateful and happy to return is a (perhaps to be expected) sentiment displayed by other caseworkers, for example Harry also refocuses onto this aspect: “the job is rewarding because – not everybody you help is grateful but some people are really grateful – and they really you know thank you and and you know send you good wishes and that is something really rewarding” (lines 181-183, page 114, appendix 6c).

Others, such as Janice (discussed at the beginning of this section), are keen to distance themselves from the term ‘voluntary’ by removing it from the name of the project. (Janice, lines 624-627, page 151, appendix 6c). Similarly, Orla from Refugee Action, problematises the project label “Choices” for clients at the end of the asylum process when the Home Office have informed them they will be deported: “...and then it almost feels quite hard that our programme is called Choices” (lines 1120-1121, page 240, appendix 6c). Here both caseworkers challenge the power-roles inherent in the term.

The analysis of these above excerpts exemplifies how both Refugee Action and IOM caseworkers orient to the controversial topic of voluntariness – that is the widespread perception that many AVR applicants do not regard return via AVR as a ‘voluntary’ option. Both Quinn and Ana acknowledge this to differing degrees, yet both refocus (Dick 2005) on the non-stigmatised aspects of the programme in which they do indeed also help people who *do* want to return, and the programmes are beneficial in this sense. The strategic use of constructed dialogue here defends their professional roles in the wider-acknowledged context of non-voluntariness or ‘dirty work’. IOM and Refugee Action caseworkers are positioned by the Home Office as administering AVR programmes which are promoted as voluntary. However, caseworkers self-position as challenging this categorisation, negotiating this inconsistency in order to provide impartial advice to AVR applicants. The following section examines how caseworkers position themselves regarding wider perceived ideological motivations.

5.3 Staff positioning with regard to institutional and Home Office ideological agendas

Bamberg’s (1997) three-level positioning framework (based on Davies and Harré’s notion of positioning, 1990), as discussed in section 2.3 of the literature review is useful in an analysis of how caseworkers position themselves with regard to perceived institutional and Home Office agendas in the research interviews. The analysis in this section focuses on Bamberg’s ‘level 3 positioning’, which examines how speakers position their identities relative to *dominant discourses* or *master narratives*. Caseworkers’ positioning in the interviews displays a tension between their perceptions of the governmental motivations of the AVR project, as led by Home Office funding requirements, and their own positions as to why they are engaged with this work. As we have already seen in excerpt 1, Quinn categorically rejects being associated with Home Office motivations, rejecting the implication that they are “somehow against them or don’t don’t care about their clients or somehow ... following the agenda of the Home Office whereas as an organisation we’re definitely not you know we’re independent we’ve always spoken out against the Home Office” (lines 5-7, excerpt 1 above).

The excerpt below is Maria's response to a question about how caseworker and outreach roles may change with the impending restructuring of the provision of the AVR programmes. To give a little background, AVR work at this level is broadly split into two areas, casework and outreach work. Outreach tasks are largely promotional and consist of sharing information about the programmes both with people who might be interested in applying for AVR, and organisations who may count these people amongst its clients. These include refugee community organisations or public sector organisations, e.g. the NHS (often referred to as 'multipliers' because they can put the institutions in touch with multiple clients). Outreach work can include: displaying posters and leaflets in public spaces, giving presentations on the AVR programmes to potential clients or institutions, holding drop-in sessions around each region for people to enquire about the programmes, and conducting one-to-one meetings with agency staff to explain the programmes in detail. The outreach role differs to the caseworker role which is office-based and, in the main, consists of interviewing clients and processing completed AVR applications. There is, however, some cross-over of the roles, and the manner in which these two broad areas of work are dealt with by the institutions differs to some degree (this is discussed in more detail in section 1.2). In the following excerpt, Maria discusses the motivations of the Home Office (referred to via their defunct agency, UK Borders Agency or 'UKBA', now subsumed within the Home Office), and Refugee Action:

Excerpt 4: "...is it outreach to recruit numbers..."

Maria, Refugee Action (appendix 6c):

1.	M	so it's gonna be very different and then there's go there's going to be more of an
2.		emphasis on outreach
		[8 lines omitted] ...
3.	M	but um there's a bit of a tension because is it outreach to recruit numbers [K: um
4.		hm] which I think is what UKBA want [data omitted]
5.	K	yeah
6.	M	or is it to myth bust and raise awareness and raise awareness and build trust in the
7.		communities

Within excerpt 4, Maria positions herself with regard to what she perceives as the wider institutional agenda, doing 'accounting work' for her participation in these programmes. In line 3 Maria queries the perceived UK motivation of the outreach side of AVR work, questioning whether it is outreach to increase the number of people returning ("is it outreach to recruit numbers..."), implying a 'burden-relieving' motivation, or outreach to "raise awareness and build trust in the communities", implying a (humanitarian) motivation based on people's right to knowledge and information about AVR. Maria represents this topic as somewhat controversial, by mitigating her commitment to this (via "a bit of"); and by nominalising "tension" (line 3), she backgrounds (van Leeuwen 1996:39) information about *who* was feeling the tension. With this passivisation, Maria chooses, initially, not to position herself as feeling this tension, displaying sensitivity towards the controversial nature of topic, and the difficulty in challenging funders' motivations.

Maria implicitly negatively evaluates the goal of 'recruiting numbers' (presumably linking this to the wider Home Office goal to reduce 'net migration') by contrasting it with the implicitly positive myth-busting, awareness-raising and building trust in lines 6-7. This categorises these two goals or motivations as separate and ethically opposed (yet achieving the same outcome), evaluating 'recruiting' as negative via this contrast device. Her negative evaluation of the UKBA tentatively positions her professional relationship with them as an '*us versus them*' relationship, where 'them' represents governmental authority. She aligns herself with her classification of the implicit 'ideal' or 'true' institutional goals of Refugee Action (given in lines 6-7) showing solidarity with the client, forming the 'us', and 'othering' (Spivak 1985) the UKBA, and as such positioning them as morally inferior (Jensen 2011:65) in this instance. Maria later again positions herself in contrast to the perceived government agenda by questioning the institutional meaning of 'sustainable': "sustainable return ... for me it's not about make[ing] sure they don't come back (laughs) ... for me it's about you know enabling the countries to flourish" (lines 715-716, page 191, appendix 6c). In doing so she formulates the institutional meaning of the term 'sustainable' as motivated to keep people from re-migrating to the UK, while her personal interpretation of the term is motivated to assist clients to create a sustainable

income and contribute to the country. In this way Maria re-frames (Dick 2005) the meaning and purpose of AVR.

Excerpt 4 shows Maria positioning herself as opposing the negatively-evaluated goals of the Home Office. She positions herself more as an advocate (explored further in section 5.3) for clients in improving their knowledge about AVR (increasing informedness) and building trust, rather than simply recruiting numbers to the programme (effectively prioritising quality of decision over quantity of applications). This aligns Maria with the best interests of the client, rather than the interests of the state or the institution. Having “the clients’ interests at heart” is something which Quinn is also keen to foreground in her interview and outreach work (line 31, page 268, appendix 6c). Maria returns to this topic of the ‘recruitment’ of clients again later in the interview, suggesting it is a key issue for her. Excerpt 4 above demonstrates how as a caseworker she negotiates her professional identity and participation in the AVR process by distancing herself from institutional and ideological motivations behind the programmes. Maria challenges the motives behind the funding of AVR work, and contemplates how the outreach tasks can be reframed (Dick 2005) to fit more comfortably with her ideological position. The meaning of the work therefore is transformed: the act of, say, putting up an AVR poster in a shop is reframed not as simply recruiting numbers (implying a quantity over quality agenda), but as making people aware of the programme, should it be useful for them. In her research examining state partnerships with NGOs, Codó argues that the process “has turned these organisations into quasi-public institutions which govern migration populations on behalf of the state” (2013:34). Maria’s positioning challenges the new relationship between Refugee Action and the Home Office, displaying recognition of the differing agendas, and resisting the Home Office agenda as taking precedence in the practice of AVR. Similarly, Quinn resists the Home Office agendas as taking precedence, positioning her role as “embedding Choices into the...broader work of Refugee Action” (line 45, page 268, appendix 6c), essentially reframing the AVR project to ideologically fit with Refugee Action’s wider rights-based goals.

In the excerpt from Carl’s interview below, we can see how the “tension” that Maria displays contrasts with Carl’s positioning regarding increasing the “numbers”, or

applications. In response to a question about which country Carl specialises in, Carl considers the merits of remaining in one role, rather than moving from team to team:

Excerpt 5: "...it takes time to build up the figure..."

Carl, IOM (appendix 6c):

1.	C	it takes time to build up the figure and also people you get to know people people
2.		know you and I don't think it's right to move around from the different role
3.	K	oh really
4.	C	er yeah
5.	K	oh what you mean within the in within the organisation or:
6.	C	yeah yeah because I I decided when I joined that I want to build up the returning to
7.		[country] [K: OK] I want to get this programme been known by as much as possible
8.		[K: OK] and I think that I saw that there was a potential for the people most people
9.		who wants to return [K: yeah] use our programme I think [K: OK] and if I moved from
10.		this position to that position to [K: yeah] other department it simply waste of time
11.		[K: oh right] if we can't focus to build up our reputation or our contact and er
12.		others our knowledge of (()) [K: yeah] we can't deliver in to the massive to the
13.		mass scale

In this excerpt, Carl positively evaluates the goal of increasing the number of applications, notably contrasting with Maria's positioning which negatively evaluates the 'recruiting' motivation behind the programmes (excerpt 4). Carl focuses a lot on his personal efforts to "build up the figure" (line 1), to get the programme known by "as much as possible" (line 7), with the goal of delivering AVR "to the mass scale" (lines 12-13), which he positions as IOM's motivation. Carl's use of the personal pronoun "our" in line 11 in "our reputation" and "our contact" displays an affiliation and commitment to the ideological motivations of the organisation. Carl positions himself as highly committed to this goal of getting the programme "known by as much as possible" (line 7) by reporting how he remained in the same job (lines 9-10) in order to build knowledge and contacts (lines 1-2; line 11).

Here we can see how there are subtle differences in how the meaning of outreach work is negotiated by the caseworkers, with Maria considering whether outreach is carried out for a UKBA meaning/goal (to increase numbers); she then re-frames it to give

another preferred meaning. These two excerpts illustrate the different positions that caseworkers took up with regard to the represented institutional goals. While Maria has fundamental issues with outreach work due to her concern whether it is simply to ‘recruit numbers’, thus distancing herself from ‘burden-relieving’ motivations, Carl displays commitment to this perceived aspect of his work. The difference in their positioning is slight and based on presuppositions however: Maria’s concern about “numbers” presupposes that recruiting numbers means a reduction in the quality of advice and hence the client’s decision; whereas Carl’s focus on numbers presupposes that quality is not compromised, evident in his categorising his recruitment as recruiting those “who wants to return” (line 9, excerpt 5).

As well as positioning themselves in relation to the ideological agendas of the institutions, caseworkers frequently oriented to the ideological motivations of the *other* institution – IOM or Refugee Action. This suggests that the perceived motivations for the programmes are a fundamental aspect of professional identity construction, providing depth of meaning to what they do. In discussing the sharing of work between offices, IOM caseworker Harry (having heard a few days before the interview that Refugee Action was to be awarded the AVR grant) considers how Refugee Action will administer the programmes.

Excerpt 6: “now they’re also going to be sending them back?”

Harry, IOM (appendix 6c):

1.	H	...yeah they’ve never done AVR and I think they have a big conflict of interest
2.	K	oh really?
3.	H	they help asylum seekers to settle in this country they help over their asylum claims
4.		and: their <u>legal</u> issues and their <u>housing</u> and their <u>NASS</u> [National Asylum Support
5.		Service] – now they’re also going to be sending them back?

In this excerpt Harry explicitly states Refugee Action has a “big conflict of interest” (line 3), contrasting the institutional goals of “helping asylum seekers to settle in this country” (line 5) and “sending” (line 7) asylum seekers back, representing them as (implicitly

morally) opposite and incompatible. Using a three-part list, described by Antaki as a “rhetorically forceful device” (1994:135), Harry accentuates the supportive work and effort that Refugee Action makes in enabling people seeking asylum to remain in the UK. By juxtaposing “sending them back” with this positively evaluated support work assisting asylum seekers to remain, Harry presupposes that for many applicants, return is not desirable. This contrast then again normalises return under AVR as non-voluntary. Allocation of agency in the use of “sending”, with Harry allocating the institution the active role, and the clients the passive one, also implies that return is not always voluntary. This connects to caseworkers’ more explicit raising of the topic of voluntariness within AVR (discussed at length in section 5.2). This use of “sending” is at odds with both Refugee Action’s and IOM’s institutional style in AVR written materials (as examined in chapter 4), in which both institutions make great effort through various discursive devices to represent clients as agentive, and return as their decision. Furthermore, by categorising Refugee Action’s new AVR role as “sending them back” (line 7), Harry simultaneously implies that this is his/IOM’s current role, which he represents as untroubled and therefore not incompatible with IOM’s ideological motivations. In this sense, Harry clearly positions the motivations of the two institutions as in conflict. This is a similar position taken by Paulo from Refugee Action, who describes IOM and Refugee Action as “two organisations with two completely different principles” (lines 316, pages 258, appendix 6c). In describing an approach to outreach work, he reflexively positions Refugee Action in terms of how it is different from IOM: “‘look we’re we’re not the IOM...we’re Refugee Action we’re doing it very differently’” (lines 195-196, page 255, appendix 6c).

In this section I have examined how caseworkers orient to the broad ideological institutional motivations behind AVR: staff take positions regarding these positively or negatively evaluated perceived agendas. These excerpts are indicative of how caseworkers differ in their positioning, and how they variably align themselves to what they perceive as institutional agendas, demonstrating tension over how AVR is, or should be defined. Further to caseworkers distancing themselves from the ‘burden-relieving’ Home Office agenda, they also at times distance themselves from the other service-provider and their institutional goals.

When studying the IOM/UNHCR relationship, Koch argues that in interviews with IOM staff involved in negotiating return-related policies, “staff members throughout the organisation struggle with, yet at the same time cling to the IOM’s concept of voluntariness” (2013:7). Although the same can be said of staff interviewed for my study, in that they represent the topic of voluntariness as troubled, it would perhaps be more accurate to say that instead of clinging to the concept, caseworkers largely distinguish and orient differently to two aspects of it: *committing* to the label in terms of the impartiality of their own AVR advice (their modality in the return process), but *challenging* the label in terms of its appropriateness regarding perceived governmental coercion of applicants.

In a blog discussing initial findings in their research on Refugee Action’s delivery of AVR, McGhee and Bennett classify Refugee Action’s relationship with the government as “fraught” (2014a), arguing that the contrasting motivations driving the programmes creates “a contested space” (2014a). The close textual analysis in this section illustrates these claims, with caseworkers contesting what it means to be offering AVR. Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* refer to Billig’s (1996) argument that “‘accounts’ exemplify the kind of activities where arguments are provided to explain the inconsistency between attitudes and actions” (2011a:60). This can be said of this context: that caseworkers do accounting work to explain the inconsistency of their own positioning towards the work, and how the “actions” of their work may be perceived due to being funded by the Home Office.

The following section examines the interpretative repertoires which caseworkers employ in the construction of professional identities.

5.4 Negotiating caseworker responsibilities: advocate and gatekeeper repertoires

In their analysis of gatekeeping in naturalization interviews in the US, Baptiste and Seig identify that “the interviewer often juggles conflicting goals of judging and assisting...”, and that “attending to these competing pressures is problematic as the gatekeeper ultimately has the authority to make decisions that negatively or positively impact an interviewee’s life opportunities” (2007:1920). This judging or assisting dilemma is also

apparent in Trinch's study of linguistic strategies used by institutional representatives to "create and manage their identities as institutional gatekeepers for their agencies and institutional advocates for their clients in protective order application interviews" (2001:475). She argues that these dual responsibilities are well-established in communicative research, and that "the roles of advocate and gatekeeper are commonly played simultaneously by legal, health and social welfare professionals" (2001:477). A close analysis of discursive positioning in caseworkers' ethnographic interviews shows how this tension between gatekeeping and advocacy, as a dimension of work, is also displayed by caseworkers, contributing towards the construction of their professional identities.

Identifying interpretative repertoires (Wetherell and Potter 1988), as introduced in section 2.3.3 of the literature review, allows for a discussion of how caseworkers employ a combination of repertoires, helping us understand the varied and at times conflicting approaches (both individually and within the staff) that AVR caseworkers have with regard to their professional identities. These repertoires can be considered as two contrasting but linked ways of making sense of responsibilities within the AVR process, a project which straddles two realms of professional life, migration control (or management) and refugee protection. By considering these identity themes as repertoires, as Potter and Wetherell argue, we analysts "do not assume that on other occasions these people would necessarily produce the same repertoires" (2010:156). This foregrounds identity construction through 'repertoires' as flexible and changeable, rather than the more static representation of professional identity via 'roles'. This final analysis section of the chapter is divided as follows: in section 5.4.1 I examine the gatekeeper repertoire, and in section 5.4.2 I discuss the advocate repertoire.

In the following excerpts I show how some caseworkers strongly position themselves as gatekeepers, for example, categorising AVR applications into either genuine or not genuine, and therefore positioning themselves as protecting the institution and its ideologies. Others construct a strong advocacy position, positioning themselves as enabling clients to access government-controlled resources. However, caseworkers also combine these repertoires, illustrating the fluidity of professional identity construction.

5.4.1 Gatekeeping repertoire

Tensions over caseworkers' professional identity appears to manifest in the seemingly conflicting use of advocate and gatekeeper repertoires (displayed in excerpts 7 and 11 below), as the caseworkers orient to problems around 'Section 4' support. To give some background to this topic, 'Section 4 support' is a limited support package provided by the government for rejected asylum seekers. After their asylum application has been rejected by the Home Office, asylum seekers are no longer eligible for the standard asylum support (welfare) package provided by the government, and are expected to leave the UK either using their own finances, with the Home Office's assistance (under their internal programme, rather confusingly called 'Voluntary Departures'), or via these AVR programmes. If they can demonstrate that they are destitute (or are likely to become so within 14 days) and are taking steps to leave the UK (if possible to do so), then the government can provide rejected asylum seekers with short-term 'Section 4 support'. This is more limited than the standard asylum support package and includes basic self-catering accommodation plus an 'Azure' payment card, pre-loaded with £35.39 per week for food and basic items (UK Visas and Immigration 2011). Crucially, a key manner in which people could evidence that they were taking reasonable steps to leave the country (and therefore qualify for this basic support) is by applying to the AVR programmes. AVR applicants have up to three months to return before their AVR application is cancelled by the Home Office. If after applying, someone fails to return via AVR and their application is cancelled, their 'Section 4 support' is also cancelled and they may face deportation (forced removal) by the Home Office. They can apply again for AVR but the Home Office limits the number of AVR applications to two (although on rare occasions they will permit a third application). Rejected asylum seekers can therefore receive this 'Section 4' support for up to six months. Due to this connection between AVR and 'Section 4', many caseworkers during my ethnographic visits to both institutions expressed that they felt that a lot of the clients had applied to the programmes solely to receive the 'Section 4' support because they were destitute, and had no intention of returning under AVR. They cited this as a reason for the high number of AVR applications which are subsequently cancelled (either by the applicant, or by the Home Office after the three months is up and the client has not returned). Intrinsic to the notion of voluntariness is clients' right to cancel their AVR

application at any stage of the process, even at the airport if they so decide. In the excerpts below, we see how caseworkers discursively position themselves with regard to this issue, contributing to their construction of a *gatekeeper* or *advocate* repertoire.

In the excerpt below, in response to a question asking how he finds working with agencies which signpost people to IOM, David discusses how some clients were not genuine in their application for AVR as, according to him, they had been told by the referral agencies to apply for AVR only to get the 'Section 4' support; they did not really intend to return via the programmes:

Excerpt 7: "...according to the law I have to receive the application..."

David, IOM (appendix 6c):

1.	K	so how do you find working with referral agencies and groups um so
2.	D	you mean those who are referring the clients to us
3.	K	yeah so er [agency's name]
4.	D	yes I mean not genuine they were not genuine people
5.	K	oh really
6.	D	giving the wrong consultation - wrong consultation to the client who kept filling
7.		[K: oh right] this application 'for three months you can get a house' [K: oh] 'for three
8.		months you can get section four' – um but (of course) they are moving or telling one
9.		thing and not all of them but majority of them are all like that I I it was not this I had
10.		to do according to the law I have to receive the application to do but it is my
11.		personal view fifty per cent is not trustable and I I am right because applications
12.		which were coming - after the approval we will contact maybe say they say 'referral
13.		agency told me to fill in application form' and they can get section four
14.	K	o:h really OK
15.	D	so then that is why they have high number of cancellation just applied section four
16.	K	OK
17.	D	(()) people they said we we knew that but like it was not legal not to process
18.		the case because [K: oh OK] the same application we send to the Home Office was
19.		we sent to the Home Office after all it was our responsibility to contact them but we
20.		can [K: mm] help them if they want to go so by that time that was the matter of
21.		anger for the clients because he was not genuine in his application [K: oh right] so he
22.		wanted something other and we were sending w- w- we were not sending we are
23.		more requesting his (()) completed your work
24.	K	so do you think when they applied they really knew that they
25.	D	they knew yeah
26.	K	that they that they
27.	D	some of them
28.	K	had to return or that they were er they were saying that they wanted to return
29.	D	they just wanted to to to (()) they just applied to get section four

In line 4 of this excerpt, David's response to my question labels external agency staff as "not genuine people", for "giving the wrong consultation" (line 6). In doing so he negatively evaluates the referring agencies' intentions, positioning himself as troubled by non-genuine applications, and the (poor) quality of the agencies' advice. In line 21 David provides a specific example in which he positions a client as "not genuine in his application" in a short narrative representing the client as angry because the agency had misled him, resulting in David pursuing the client to process his AVR application, when the client had only wanted 'Section 4' support ("so he wanted something other", line 22). David's labelling of some agencies and some applications as "not genuine" displays a concern with protecting institutional resources from misuse or worse, abuse. The agencies' reported provision of inaccurate advice in "giving the wrong consultation" (line 6) allocates the blame or responsibility for these non-genuine applications with the agency (not the client). This is further reiterated in lines 12-13 with a framed direct quote ostensibly representative of clients' speech: "they say 'referral agency told me to fill in application form' and they can get section four". This morally evaluates applying for AVR solely for "Section 4 support" (line 8) as in opposition to the institution, so categorically wrong.

Forms completed for 'Section 4' purposes only, have other ramifications: if the client does not understand what exactly they are applying for (not understanding they are applying to return 'home'), they may do so without realising the legal consequences, i.e. that their asylum application in the UK is affected. Therefore in using this gatekeeper repertoire, David also displays a protective position towards the client, protecting them from what he categorises as incorrect advice. David's reference to "kept filling this application" in line 6 displays David's position in this narrative as having to repeatedly deal with this behaviour. In lines 7-8 where David's use of agency staff's imagined dialogue explicitly allocates responsibility for these "not genuine" applications to the referral agency: "'for three months you can get a house' ... 'for three months you can get section four'". In this constructed dialogue David imagines what they might say in these "wrong consultations", positioning agency staff as focused on the benefits of applying for AVR to become eligible for Section 4 support.

The tension in David's professional identity as institutional gatekeeper and his discomfort in processing applications which he feels are dishonest is displayed in lines 9-10 where deontic modalisation in "had to according to the law" (in that he is obliged to process the applications) legitimises his actions via authority legitimisation (van Leeuwen 2007:94). David's reference to "the law" in line 10 and "it was not legal not to process" in line 17 can be considered as a type of extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986:219), given that whether to process AVR applications or not is not usually considered or discussed in terms of legality, rather in terms of institutional policy. Line 10 ("I have to receive the application to do but it is my personal view...") implies that for David processing the application may be morally wrong, albeit the legally correct thing to do (almost 'dirty work' for David, illustrating Dick's (2005) claim that what 'dirty work' entails may differ across staff). David in this way takes up a defensive/adversarial position in justifying his processing of these seemingly false applications, which he negatively evaluates. David intensifies the epistemic modality from "personal view" (line 11) when he explicitly states that "I am right", justifying his "personal view" that 50% of applications are "not trustable" (line 11). In framing this evaluation as personal he distances this claim from his professional identity, perhaps acknowledging the sensitive nature of categorising clients' applications in this way. In this short excerpt we can see how David positions himself with regard to the reported problem of the connection between 'Section 4 support' and AVR. As a result of negatively evaluating some referral agencies and (as directed by the agencies) some applicants as abusing the system, David positions himself as wishing to protect it, though being unable to do so due to 'legal' restrictions. His defensive and justificatory position of processing what he regards as dishonest applications displays his professional identity as a gatekeeper of the institution's resources, albeit, in this reported instance, an unsuccessful one.

The categorisation and labelling of clients in terms of genuineness is also employed by Carl, a caseworker at IOM, and again with reference to clients referred to IOM by agencies: "...they have different purpose some organisations they ... put clients purely for getting benefit or other things some of them are – some of them yeah more some of them are genuine they really want to go home" (lines 247-248, page 44, appendix 6c). Again this apports blame to the agencies rather than the clients, positioning clients as

innocent in this threat to the institution. Categorising clients' applications as either genuine or not genuine, is characteristic of a gatekeeper repertoire.

The gatekeeper repertoire is also employed by Edward, a caseworker from IOM, in discussing what he would change about the programme:

Excerpt 8: '...and if you are not ready don't come to me and apply'

Edward (IOM), appendix 6c:

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | E | ...and the third thing I would change is the time limit given to applicants er after their approval to leave the country |
| 2. | K | meaning because you don't feel it's enough or it's too much or: |
| 3. | E | I feel it's too much three months |
| 4. | K | really uhuh |
| 5. | E | 'and if you are not ready don't come to me and apply' |
| 6. | K | ah I see |
| 7. | E | 'if you are sick and you want to treat yourself in this country [K: yeah] don't |
| 8. | | come to me and apply [K: OK] because you need to wait for an operation you |
| 9. | | need the minimum waiting time of six months [K: oh OK] so what's the point if |
| 10. | | you if you are waiting for an operation to come and apply I want to go back' |
| 11. | K | oh OK so they've applied too soon |
| 12. | E | too soon yeah |

Again, by using a binary contrast device in line 5, implicitly categorising clients as being either ready or "not ready" to go, Edward positions himself as a gatekeeper, protecting institutional resources. However, in employing this gatekeeper repertoire, protecting the institution from 'non-genuine' clients, caseworkers may deny the context in which people apply. Edward for example, describes a client who has applied to return but is waiting for an operation; it is conceivable that they would need Section 4 support while waiting for the operation, and hence apply for AVR in order to prove their intention to return after the operation.

In the following excerpt David and I had been discussing getting feedback from clients about whether they were happy upon return. I ask David about clients who are worried about what happens to them in the airport (a reported issue for a particular country):

Excerpt 9: "...and if you think you are not safe in your country don't go..."

David, IOM (appendix 6c):

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | D | so it don't want we don't want to be involved in that area because we tell them |
| 2. | | 'if you are not sure what is happening to you [K: mm hm] and if you think you |
| 3. | | are not safe in your country don't go' |
| 4. | K | OK |
| 5. | D | we are not helping anybody who is telling us that he is not safe |
| 6. | K | yeah |
| 7. | D | it is a voluntary (()) 'if you are not safe if you are just telling me your life |
| 8. | | is in danger still you want to go so we don't want to support you' |
| 9. | K | yeah |
| 10. | D | and and 'if you put these things in words er in in writing [K: yeah] so we are not |
| 11. | | processing the application' because he he tell us his life is in danger [K: yeah] he |
| 12. | | is not er feeling well about his security then why should help him put ourself in |
| 13. | | trouble |

David's use of constructed dialogue here with a direct framed quote of his own speech is forceful in representing exactly how he deals with this situation. He is categorical: if clients do not feel safe, they cannot go (lines 10-12). Like the categorisation of clients into genuine or not genuine, this binary contrast of being "safe" or in "danger" is characteristic of the gatekeeper repertoire. In using the gatekeeper repertoire with people who express fears about return, David assumes the power to reject applications, gatekeeping the AVR programme: in this way the gatekeeping repertoire functions to protect the institution (and its staff), this time not from an abuse of resources, but from the responsibility of assisting someone to return to somewhere dangerous (see lines 12-13). As David later explicitly states, "...we don't want to put anybody in danger no client no our colleagues..." (lines 364-365, page 62, appendix 6c). In this way, caseworkers also position clients as challenging the power roles structurally allocated to them by the Home Office. However, by rejecting these applications, the Home Office exerts bureaucratic and linguistic control over the clients: if they wish to apply for AVR, they must not say that they feel endangered upon return.

What is interesting about the use of these repertoires is that Paulo, a Refugee Action caseworker, characterises IOM staff's approach with clients by using a gatekeeper

interpretative repertoire as well. In excerpt 10 below, I ask Paulo about a point he had made earlier about the organisations having different principles:

Excerpt 10: “...it was very sort of black and white...”:

Paulo, Refugee Action (appendix 6c):

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | P | whereas the IOM were much more about um ‘you sign for Voluntary Return or you |
| 2. | | don’t’ ‘you go home or you don’t’ [K: OK] it was very sort of black and white |

Paulo categorises the IOM approach to assisting clients as taking a “black and white” (line 12) approach, in which people either apply or not. His use of IOM caseworkers’ imagined speech in lines 11-12 characterise IOM caseworkers as viewing AVR and the decision to return as unproblematic, again as binary opposites of ‘going’ or ‘not going’, ‘signing’ or ‘not signing’.

This section has shown how the gatekeeper repertoire – characterised by labelling clients as genuine/non-genuine, and as a simple decision of going/not-going – as functioning to protect the institution’s resources from people who apply but do not return. This relates perhaps to the pressured office environment, where staff expressed not even having time “to breathe” due to the high workload. The gatekeeper repertoire also functions to protect the institution and staff from being responsible for clients’ safety: if clients express fear about return, then they cannot go via AVR.

5.4.2 Advocate repertoire

David’s use of the gatekeeper repertoire above, however, contrasts with the following excerpt from Maria discussing the same topic of ‘Section 4’ support: Maria rejects the repertoire of gatekeeper, employing instead an advocate one. This demonstrates how caseworkers adopt different interpretative repertoires regarding this specific topic, which function to construct different positions regarding their professional responsibilities.

In the following excerpt, Maria begins by considering how the people who apply for AVR and proceed with arranging their travel documents, but then choose not to return immediately, might be applying for ‘Section 4’ purposes only.

Excerpt 11: “but this is fine this is also their right”

Maria, Refugee Action (appendix 6c):

1.	M	some of them who leave a lot of time between travel document and flight is to my
2.		mind suggests section four and maybe the (()) just
3.	K	OK yeah
4.	M	from my experience of some clients but this is fine this is also their right so I would
5.		think they we could perhaps explore with them a little bit I think it would be quite
6.		nice as well because it’d enable us to cos me personally I come much more from a a
7.		community development background
8.	K	yeah
9.	M	and education style type so working with forms sometimes I you know find it
10.		disempowering for myself
11.	K	OK

Like David, Maria raises the topic of ‘Section 4’ applications herself. In contrast to David (excerpt 7 above), however, Maria (with low epistemic modality) only tentatively, in “to my mind suggests” (lines 1-2), indicates how she might identify applicants applying for ‘Section 4’ reasons only. Maria positions clients as having the right to take time over their application and seek ‘Section 4 support’ (line 4 “this is also their right”), taking up a position which aligns with the clients’ perceived needs. The use of “but” in line 4 implies that this may be evaluated by some as wrong or not “fine”. This differs from David’s gatekeeper position of strongly negatively evaluating these types of application and his orienting to protecting institutional resources from non-genuine applications. The different positioning in terms of deontic modality contributes to their distinct repertoires here: reference to their professional obligation to process these types of application is framed as negative by David (in terms of legally having to process them), and as positive by Maria (in terms of having a right to apply for, and take time over, AVR or change their minds). Maria furthermore positions herself as an advocate in lines 6-7 by aligning herself with community development approaches and implicit awareness-raising (in line 7), which

can be regarded as drawing on “the positive evaluations tied to ‘community’ discourse” (Wetherell and Potter, 1998:170). She distances herself from bureaucratic processes in line 9 where she categorises working with “forms” as disempowering, aligning herself with clients and contrasting institutional constraints of “forms” with her preference to “explore” issues with clients in line 5. This juxtaposes the different repertoires in which “forms” constitute highly typical texts from the gatekeeping repertoire, and Maria’s “community development” style approach from the advocate repertoire. Maria employs the advocacy interpretative repertoire again later in her interview where she juxtaposes the mundane nature of the work in processing applications with her positioning of Refugee Action as community development-based which therefore “has to be advocates of well I feel of um justice” (lines 873-874, page 194, appendix 6c). This categorises Refugee Action’s work as more than just AVR, but as rights-based.

One might expect mainly Refugee Action staff, given the institution’s background in advocacy – and long-term role in providing *pre-decision* advice to AVR applicants – to employ the advocate repertoire. However, IOM staff also make use of the advocate repertoire, even though IOM as an institution does not focus formally on advocacy work and these caseworkers have never provided pre-decision advice in their roles. In response to a question about how people with mental health problems were assisted, IOM caseworker Janice, for example, also employs the advocate repertoire in constructing her professional identity.

Excerpt 12: “so I guess you can get as involved or as not involved as you like”

Janice, IOM (appendix 6c):

1.	K	oh OK so were they clients that um had mental health problems that were
2.		explicit so maybe another agency told you about or ones that you kind of
3.		realised
4.	J	a a a combination again like a couple of them there’s an [nationality 4] guy in
5.		[organisation anonymised] who’s in a homeless shelter and they told me that he
6.		had depression and kind of anxiety issues [K: uhuh] and he was somebody who
7.		needed a lot more support [K: mm] and I needed to work a lot more with him to
8.		get his application through and everything and work with his support

9.		workers and that's (()) easier but then I had another client who I
10.		was quite involved with assisting who I'm sure had mental health issues
11.		and and and I don't know what exactly but he hadn't been he'd been
12.		assessed as not having anything
13.	K	oh really
14.	J	but I think it's more like autism or some kind of learning difficulty which
15.		obviously is harder to detect
16.	K	oh wow yeah
17.	J	and cos there's no cure for it why would it be in the NHS interest to kind
18.		of go through a long term thing for a failed asylum seeker
19.	K	oh OK yeah
20.	J	so that made it really difficult and then it made it more difficult for us to
21.		get extra assistance for him because obviously you need a medical letter
22.		to get all that
23.	K	yeah
24.	J	but I mean I when I spoke with the doctor he has he agreed with me
25.		that there was some issue and he he'd bring me a letter saying this
26.	K	really oh OK
27.	J	without actually seeing the client again which was useful
28.	K	so then what happened with that with the client
29.	J	um well it was his third application so we had to sort of um
30.	K	oh right
31.	J	protest it through and then he was the guy I actually escorted to
32.		Heathrow
33.	K	oh OK yeah
34.	J	cos we couldn't get anyone else just cos the fact there was nobody else
35.		looking out for him and he he was um really vulnerable and was dealing with it
36.		all by himself sort of thing
37.	K	OK
38.	J	um yeah
39.	K	yeah quite difficult then
40.	J	yeah so that kind of thing it was quite difficult and the job kind of really went on
41.		to kind of um – oh what's the word like get more and more in depth as it
42.		went on?
43.	K	OK
44.	J	so I guess you can get as involved or as not involved as you like
45.	K	yeah
46.	J	um yeah as you take on more kind of it's more difficult to deal with in some
47.		ways

Janice's representation of processing an application for someone with mental health problems as being somewhat of a struggle in line 6 ("I needed to work a lot more with him to get his application through"), positions Janice as advocating on behalf of the client,

arguing the applicant's case to hierarchy (whether that's IOM London caseworkers, IOM London managers, or Home Office staff) in order to get the application approved and therefore secure the extra assistance that is available for people with health problems (for example the availability of medical escorts and taxis). Likewise in line 28 when discussing a different client with health problems, Janice's verb choice of "protest it through" positions her actions as advocating on behalf of the client and wrangling with the authorities. This at the same time positions the Home Office as the real gatekeepers with the ultimate power to approve a normally-prohibited third AVR application. This verb choice is similar to Ana from IOM's description of working on an application from a family who were destitute ("you go back to Home Office explaining the situation pushing them a bit harder", lines 82, page 3, appendix 6c). This metaphor is again employed by Richard, from Refugee Action, who twice refers to "battling" with the Home Office (lines 1070 and 1079, page 306, appendix 6c) for the clients' benefit. The metaphor of fighting for resources for clients from the Home Office (in *struggling, pushing for, battling*) is key in the advocate repertoire, constructing a proactive professional identity. Roberts *et al.* in their work examining discrimination in gatekeeping encounters argue that the gate "can be opened by gatekeepers, or pushed open by those able to assert their right to enter" (1992:118). With this advocate metaphor, caseworkers represent themselves as battling the gatekeepers (Home Office) for resources, and, asserting their clients' right to enter the gate, taking an archetypal advocate position. As Richard states, "we're very - Refugee Action is good at ... lobbying the Home Office especially ... to change things" (lines 1059-1060, page 306, appendix 6c).

Lines 4-36 in excerpt 12 include a short narrative about Janice escorting an applicant with "mental health issues" (line 10) to the airport. This narrative demonstrates Janice presenting herself as going above and beyond her job role in first recognising "mental health issues" (line 10) that were not already institutionally acknowledged (line 11-12). Her efforts to get this status officially confirmed by the GP mean that the applicant is then classified as a 'medical case', and eligible for extra assistance because of that categorisation. Janice positions herself again as advocate when she represents herself stepping in and escorting the client to Heathrow (which she would have sought managerial permission for) when there was "nobody else looking out for him". The use of

extreme case formulation here in “nobody else” formulates the work as advocacy by evaluating escorting the applicant to Heathrow as a positive and caring action for a client represented as powerless and in need of protection, representing Janice as taking a humanitarian approach.

The use of narratives which position staff as seemingly going above and beyond their role is a regular feature in the data. Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski in their examination of ethnographic research methods argue that narratives “have been described by ethnographers as important elements of organizational reality used by people to make sense of their world” (2008:188). Just like the strategic use of constructed dialogue to account for caseworkers’ involvement in the process when considering the voluntariness of the programmes (as discussed above in section 5.1), the use of these ‘above and beyond’ narratives positions caseworkers as doing all they can to help clients. They form part of the advocate repertoire, and function to repair any potential threats to caseworkers’ social identity which might occur when they are forcibly-positioned by the institutions to process applications from people in this particularly asymmetrical professional relationship. Schrauf, in his examination of the use of narratives to repair social identity, recognises the particular “social force” (2000:127) that narratives have in showing that the narrator is not at fault. Narratives in this data, as such, functioned to counter any negative perceptions implicit in carrying out the caseworker job in this, often controversial, area of work.

The advocate repertoire then functions to distance the caseworkers from the perceived ‘burden-relieving’ agenda of the Home Office, positioning caseworkers as motivated by the individual’s specific needs, therefore formulating their advice as non-directive or impartial. The gatekeeper repertoire is important for caseworkers, however, because it functions to protect them (and the institution) from the responsibility of assisting people who have stated they will be in danger upon return. However, the gatekeeper repertoire in a sense can also be used to foreground caseworkers’ impartiality; by employing binary contrasts of e.g. safe/not safe, caseworkers display they categorically have no interest in assisting people to return who feel unsafe.

5.5 Chapter summary

In her analysis of the changing relationship between IOM and UNHCR, Koch argues that her interviews with institutional staff are “crucial for gaining an understanding of the self-perceptions of those individuals who drive the international governance of return, and for contextualising the official documents on migrant return that are also analysed” (2013:6). Although my discursive approach does not claim to understand the self-perceptions of Refugee Action and IOM caseworkers through these interviews, their positioning with regard to institutional ideologies demonstrates how they discursively negotiate and mediate the relationship between the institution and the client, and contextualise the institutional written materials analysed in chapter 4.

In contrast to findings from chapter 4 in which IOM and Refugee Action leaflets and IOM *Stories of Return* discursively construct AVR as voluntary, an analysis of caseworkers’ orientation to the topic in ethnographic interviews has demonstrated how this label is challenged. Much like the Refugee Action *Stories of Return*, caseworkers in fact formulate AVR as very often non-voluntary, and in doing so they challenge the institutions’ representation of clients’ agency. Caseworkers’ account work via rhetorical devices displays their discomfort with this controversial aspect of the role, or ‘dirty work’ in Dick’s (2005) terms. Without doubt the AVR programmes are beneficial for some people returning, and the analysis demonstrates how caseworkers employ discursive strategies to refocus onto this less troubled area of the work. By foregrounding clients who *do* want to return, they rationalise their involvement with the programmes.

Further to the specific issue of voluntariness, this analysis has shown how caseworkers orient to the wider perceived ideological assumptions and motivations underpinning the programmes, with discursively realised tensions existing between Home Office, IOM and Refugee Action’s perceived motivations, and the caseworkers’ displayed values. Given Refugee Action’s recent role in taking on the administration of the whole AVR project, and losing funding for their other more traditional advocacy-style work, it is perhaps understandable that Refugee Action’s advocacy work is still represented as central to the institution’s identity. Staff (and institutional management) have to

negotiate the new and shifting identity of the institution, where the 'controversial' work of AVR also manifests in caseworkers constructing new professional identities.

As Holmes *et al.* (1999:354) state: "[a]ny analysis which focuses on the construction of professional identity [in the workplace] is therefore ... inevitably concerned with the ways in which power and solidarity are enacted through discourse", and this is evident in the use of gatekeeper and advocate repertoires. Potter and Wetherell argue that it is not "sufficient for analysis to simply identify these different forms of language in the abstract. We need to know, first, the uses and functions of different repertoires, and second, the problems thrown up by their existence" (2010:149). They go on to propose that interpretative repertoires "are used to perform different sorts of accounting tasks" (2010:156), and this can be seen in the analysis above, showing how staff draw on both repertoires, separately and together.

The advocate repertoire functions to position staff as motivated by the interests of the client, despite being funded by the Home Office with its perceived 'burden-relieving' motivations. Their ability to advocate for the clients and improve their situation in this limited context contributes to a positive social identity for the caseworker in this 'controversial' work. Furthermore it distances clients from the perceived Home Office agenda and assigns the gatekeeping role to the government or management within the institution. By distancing the AVR programmes from the Home Office agenda, it re-frames the whole AVR project in terms of assisting the client as the main goal, rather than reducing net-migration. It positions the caseworkers as constrained by institutional policies and hierarchy, and represents them as aligning and showing solidarity with the clients and their interests. In doing so, they position themselves as challenging structural asymmetries of power. The advocate repertoire is also employed by staff who largely use the gatekeeper repertoire in constructing a professional identity, which serves to demonstrate how although they primarily position themselves as protecting institutional resources, they also position themselves as assisting clients who they deem as meriting the support (deserving or 'genuine' clients) or truly wishing to return.

The gatekeeper repertoire functions to construct a loyal professional identity, aligning the caseworker with the interests of the institution and its ideological

motivations. When used in reference to so-called 'Section 4' applications, the gatekeeper repertoire positions the caseworker as aware of the 'true' nature of the application but unable to protect the institution from it. Similarly, it positions the caseworker as unable to protect the client from mis-information from other agencies.

The flexible use of these repertoires displays a tension both within individual's professional identity construction, and within the staff body as a whole. As Roberts *et al.* argue, "...the majority of bureaucratic encounters are negotiations in which the applicant's worth is being judged, even though in most cases no such goal is made explicit. The interviewer, teacher or manager has the power of a gatekeeper to either give or deny access to the scarce resources and opportunities which are on offer" (1992:97).

Different positioning regarding the protection of institutional resources perhaps suggests different approaches to the extent to which caseworkers will advocate on clients' behalf. Given the variability within caseworkers' displayed professional identities, I suggest that clients possibly receive a largely variable service in terms of what institutional information and resources they have access to.

Although seemingly distinct, the two repertoires of advocate and gatekeeper are, however, closely linked. As Trinch states "[w]hile the labo[u]r of advocacy consists of empowering clients and validating their concerns and feelings, the task of gatekeeping entails making judgments about them in order to dole out goods and services" (Trinch 2001:475). This contradiction is evident in Janice's use of the repertoires: she employs an advocate repertoire, placing the clients' needs at the centre of her work and using narrative to foreground how she makes additional effort to assist clients. Unlike other caseworkers employing an advocate repertoire, Janice represents her level of advocacy as dependant on how much she wants to do it for the client (lines 39-42). As well as positioning herself as advocating on behalf of these particular clients, she implicitly positions caseworkers as gatekeepers too: she represents caseworkers as able to choose just how much they wish to advocate for people, in a sense acknowledging that caseworkers are also controlling clients' access to their ability to advocate for the client.

This chapter has illustrated via the close textual analysis of interviews with IOM and Refugee Action caseworkers how there is a deep-rooted and on-going struggle over

how to define AVR. It has shown how caseworkers problematise fundamental aspects of the AVR programmes, in that they challenge the representation of all clients as having a free choice. However, caseworkers display commitment to their impartiality and independence from the Home Office and its motivations. In navigating this difficult institutional relationship, caseworkers vary in their construction of their professional identities as characteristically having a gatekeeper or advocate dimension.

The following chapter explores how caseworkers negotiate multilingualism, examining how they maintain and challenge asymmetries of power within the AVR programmes.

6. Managing institutional spaces: caseworkers' negotiation of top-down multilingualism and clients' linguistic repertoires

6.1. Introduction

In chapter 4 I examined the discursive representation of ideological motivations for AVR in institutional written materials, and their subsequent and varied formulation of AVR as voluntary. In chapter 5, I explored how caseworkers challenge institutional ideologies of voluntariness in our research interviews; I further showed how caseworkers aligned and distanced themselves from perceived institutional motivations and agendas underpinning the programmes. Having noted how voluntariness, a key tenet of AVR, is problematised in Refugee Action *Stories of Return* (in chapter 4), and by the caseworkers (in chapter 5), I have detailed, through close discursive analysis, how AVR occupies a contested (McGhee and Bennett 2014b) space. In this last analytic chapter (6), I turn to another key tenet of AVR, *informedness*. I focus on how caseworkers represent a specific aspect of their work – their mediation of clients' (perceived) linguistic repertoires (defined in section 2.4.4), and IOM and Refugee Action's response to linguistic diversity via multilingualism. This aspect of AVR work can be seen to contribute to the opportunities clients have to become informed about AVR. This is both important in and of itself, but also crucial in the labelling of AVR as 'voluntary'.

Both IOM and Refugee Action and their staff face on-going challenges in ascertaining clients' linguistic competences in order to provide clients access to AVR information. As Blommaert and Backus state in their examination of superdiverse repertoires, a linguistic repertoire "is composed of a myriad of different communicative tools, with different degrees of functional specialization. No single resource is a communicative panacea; none is useless" (2013:25). Caseworkers must negotiate and exploit these 'communicative tools' in order to communicate AVR to clients.

In this chapter, I demonstrate how caseworkers orient to clients' superdiversity (Vertovec 2007, see section 2.4.2) by at times challenging the institutional provision of AVR resources, and resisting institutional constructions of clients as, for example, uniformly 'literate', and as sharing uniform literacy practices. In doing so, I argue that caseworkers display their *criticality* (Li 2011a:1223) in contesting 'received wisdom',

inherent in top-down multilingualism. I further examine how some caseworkers also display *creativity* (Li 2011a:1223), or resourcefulness, when representing themselves as *translanguaging* (Creese and Blackledge 2010; Garcia 2009), and *mode-switching* (Baynham, 1997, Li 2011). Their strategic mixing of languages and modalities to make the best use of linguistic and institutional resources available, when communicating AVR to clients, displays an orientation to their superdiversity.

This going against “norms of behaviour” (Li 2011a:1223) by choosing different modalities and languages, and relying on these unofficial and ad-hoc processes of communication, constitutes new (or unofficial) forms of institutional multilingual practice, and are actions shaped by caseworkers’ conceptions of clients’ literacy practices and linguistic repertoires (discussed in section 2.4.4), and the appropriateness of the official institutional response. Through this creativity and criticality, caseworkers are resisting ideological asymmetry perceived in top-down multilingualism.

Before beginning the analysis, in section 6.1.1 below, I situate my study within research on multilingualism and multimodality, and define my use of terms.

6.1.1 Multimodality and translanguaging

In introducing research on multilingualism and multimodality in the education setting, De Saint-Georges acknowledges that “multilingualism and multimodality are on the surface seemingly unrelated”; however, she describes the themes as constituting “useful vantage points from which to observe and describe some of the changing experiences and priorities brought to [educational sites] by the new social order” (2013:2). Li points out that switching between modalities (e.g. written/spoken) “is part of the multimodality communication in which all of us are routinely engaged, but it has received relatively little attention in codeswitching and multilingualism research generally” (2011:370). It is how these two themes meet and intersect in this different site – AVR gatekeeping-encounters – which is explored in this chapter.

I approach multilingual practice at the caseworker-level as *linguaging*, that is, when “language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal with the intention of achieving their communicative aim” (Jørgensen 2008:169). Specifically, this

can be considered as *translanguaging*, using Li and Zhu's use of the term where the prefix *trans-* highlights the fluidity of multilingual practices representing translanguaging as the act of "going between and beyond (linguistic) systems and structures, including different modalities (e.g. speaking, writing, signing), and communicative contexts or spaces" (2013:4). Although *translanguaging* is a term borne out of teaching bilingual students, the term is useful when applying to the institutional service encounters, in which clients' 'learning' about AVR can be regarded as akin to students learning a language, in that both spheres are promoting access to specific knowledge, or epistemic access. In considering how caseworkers may be translanguaging, we gain insight into what access clients have to AVR information resources, and how the caseworkers provide the context for this access and shape the environment.

Various definitions of translanguaging exist, with the term being relatively new and in flux; however, I employ Li and Zhu's broader use of the term translanguaging in this AVR context where caseworkers represent what they do as both choosing and switching between *modalities*, as well as choosing and switching between languages. In an environment where clients are superdiverse and resources limited, the choice of modality is often presented as a response to the gap between the inaccessibility of AVR texts in a certain language, and the perceived linguistic needs of the client. The term *mode-switching* is employed in this chapter to describe the process of mixing and switching between modalities to best exploit the specific functions of each particular modality (Baynham, 1997: 294; Li 2011b:379). However, the broader, umbrella term of *translanguaging* shall be used within this thesis to acknowledge that caseworkers refer to switching between modalities, but they may also refer to switching between languages at the same time. This keeps in mind the fluidity of the translanguaging process. Of course, switching modalities does not always function as a strategy to improve potential comprehension of AVR information amongst superdiverse clients.

Instead of analysing how translanguaging occurs in practice, this study takes a different approach, analysing how translanguaging is represented by caseworkers as a communicative strategy, analysing language about language. In this chapter I focus on representations of translanguaging and mode-switching employed to increase epistemic access. Kerfoot and Simon-Vandenberg, in their review of methods to improve epistemic access in the South African education system, define epistemic access as

“access to the knowledge that education institutions distribute” (2015:177). In this setting, epistemic access can be regarded as access to AVR knowledge which the IOM and Refugee Action ‘distribute’/provide. In the context of AVR, caseworkers’ negotiation of top-down multilingualism impacts on what semiotic resources clients have access to, and ultimately, the extent to which clients are prepared for, and informed about, return. With regard to migrants accessing health care, Moyer argues that language “is considered a valuable resource with serious consequences for a migrant’s physical wellbeing, especially when communication is problematic” (2013:196). The same can be said of people applying for AVR programmes: here too, serious consequences in terms of the decision to return and levels of preparedness may result from clients’ inability to understand or make use of AVR resources. It is therefore crucial to analyse understandings of multilingualism and institutional responses to linguistic diversity in this AVR setting, and examine what Blommaert describes as a core problem of sociolinguistics, that of “differential access to [linguistic] forms” (2005:76). Every assumption or ideological use of linguistic resources by the institution or caseworker in this social environment of low “presupposability” (Blommaert and Backus, 2013:13) (due to superdiversity, discussed in section 2.4.2), may result in clients having “differential capacities to accomplish certain functions” (Blommaert, 2005:76), as discussed in section 2.4. However, as discussed in section 2.4, clients’ access to contextual spaces is also critical in understanding how the client-institution relationship might be ideologically asymmetrical, and shaped by institutional responses to superdiversity.

In concluding this chapter, I reflect on how caseworkers negotiate both individual and institutional linguistic resources in order to communicate AVR. I argue that modalities are complementary in the provision of AVR, and argue that translanguaging and mode-switching by individual caseworkers is vital in this specific institutional context to maximise opportunities for clients’ epistemic access in this multilingual environment. As well as revealing areas of communicative practice that caseworkers perceive as difficult, I also consider how the analytic concept of translanguaging (including mode-switching) can be usefully employed in this new context of AVR, and reflect on how it could be further utilised in understanding this realm of work. This chapter relies mainly on interview data, combined with ethnographic observations and institutional AVR documents.

Ethnographic observation in this AVR setting, and personal experience in providing AVR information, establishes that information in the *written* modality enables clients to: refer back to steps in the AVR process, clarify details and figures, make legal undertakings by signing documents, take in information at their leisure rather than in the office environment, share and discuss AVR information with friends/family, use documents as evidence of promised support, and confirm what was said in a meeting. While information in the *spoken* modality (over the phone, face-to-face or in video format) can enable clients to: have information read aloud to them when they cannot read it for themselves, have difficult issues explained and clarified, ask questions about the process, and discuss issues clients and/or staff are uncomfortable committing to in writing. Evident complementarity leads me to the position that one modality clearly does not always adequately replace another; and if at all possible, clients should have access to information via both written and spoken modalities. However, if one is not accessible/available (due to budgetary or ideological decisions), then it would seem vital that the other is. Therefore, clients' repertoires may be 'truncated' (Blommaert 2005:76) in two key ways: firstly whether clients have access to AVR information in *any* modality in a language they understand; and secondly whether they get to benefit from the functions of particular modalities.

This chapter then, examines how IOM and Refugee Action caseworkers orient to the task of communicating AVR to superdiverse clients, positioning themselves with regard to clients' linguistic resources and the provision of written AVR resources available. Although I recognise the value of analysing orientations to *spoken* multilingualism, for reasons of space, the analysis in this chapter focuses on written multilingualism. Written multilingualism has been focused on due to the key role they place in detailing the steps of the AVR programmes, accessing financial components of the reintegration assistance, and informing clients about the legal ramifications of applying for AVR. This chapter as a whole will consider what role institutional decisions regarding multilingualism (at both organisation and caseworker level) may have in the reproduction of social and institutional order, shaping the discursive environment in which clients prepare for return. It is divided as follows:

- **(Section 6.1:** chapter introduction)
- **Section 6.2:** background information about IOM and Refugee Action top-down institutional approach to multilingualism

- **Section 6.3:** examination of how caseworkers orient to written multilingualism
- **Section 6.4:** examination of how caseworkers negotiate clients' literacy practices
- **Section 6.5:** chapter summary

Following Blommaert and Backus, in the absence of any preferable and more nuanced vocabulary, in the analysis which follows, I refer to languages as “named entities” (2013:21). However I recognise that languages are, as Blackledge and Creese argue “social constructs, invented by nations in the course of nation-building, and that linguistic resources need not be understood as bounded, discrete ‘languages’” (2010:17).

6.2 Top-down (official) institutional responses to clients' superdiversity

In order to examine how caseworkers orient to top-down multilingualism, it is important to delineate what the institutions' official approach to multilingualism is, the environment it constructs, and the resources caseworkers have available to them. In the sections below, I review the institutions' translation procedures. I then consider how these approaches may contribute to a hierarchy of languages and modalities within the delivery of the AVR programmes. Institutions are examined both together and separately, as appropriate.

6.2.1 Translation practice

As can be seen from the tables in appendices 4a and 4b, surveying which written texts are available in which languages, both IOM and Refugee Action provide translations of AVR information materials, but do so to differing degrees, both in terms of the range of languages, and the documents they choose to translate. (It should be noted, however, that Refugee Action, as current providers of the service, are constantly developing new information materials and procedures).

6.2.1.1 IOM

IOM produces AVR leaflets in 36 languages, all official nation-state languages (such as Arabic, French, Mandarin and Spanish) except for: Kurdish Sorani (an official language of Iraq), Gujarati (a widely spoken language in India), and Tigrinya (a language widely spoken in Eritrea, which does not have any official languages). Other documents translated into 36 languages include the *Stories of Return*, *VARRP Frequently Asked Questions*, *AVRIM Frequently Asked Questions* and the *AVR card leaflet*, indicating that these documents are deemed most useful/important in the process. Linguistic minorities are not provided for via translated materials.

Although some of the AVR texts are available in languages other than English, IOM has focused on translating materials used more in outreach – AVR leaflets, posters, FAQs and cards – than documents used specifically during the application process or in preparing for return. For example, materials that assist clients to prepare for return, including the IOM *How to Start a Business Guide*, the IOM *How to access reintegration assistance* poster and the *IOM Reintegration Matrix* are not translated. IOM London's website does not include any translated pages.

IOM have produced an introductory video in 20 languages, which includes English subtitles; no AVR written texts are transcribed into audio format. IOM also offer videos of selected individual *Stories of Return* in seven languages.

6.2.1.2 Refugee Action

Refugee Action translates their standard AVR leaflet and their website (which includes *Frequently Asked Questions*) into 20 languages and, like IOM, they are all official nation-state languages, save Kurdish Sorani. Again like IOM, linguistic minorities are not provided for via translated materials. Selected areas of Refugee Action's website have been translated into 17 languages, again into nation-state official languages. Refugee Action's website includes more translations of texts used more during the application *process*, rather than in outreach work. They include: PDFs on the Choices process chart, Airport Assistance, Help with the journey and to build a new life, Fingerprinting, and the Complaints policy.

Refugee Action also provides an introductory DVD in 16 languages with English subtitles; no written AVR texts are transcribed into audio format. Refugee Action currently provides on its website 13 selected *Stories of Return* (with clients being interviewed) in video format; those not in English, have English subtitles.

Terminology

In contrast to IOM, Refugee Action has paid particular attention to AVR terminology, a topic which Refugee Action caseworker Richard orients to in explaining the benefits of using the same interpreters regularly: “...they know what AVR is in [language 2] - they know what re-entry ban is in [language 2]...” (lines 108-109, page 287, appendix 6c). In several texts within their information pack (which are used during the application process), Refugee Action acknowledges that some readers may not understand AVR terminology and references to organisations in English, and has indicated that these words “cannot be translated” (e.g. see VARRP client information sheet, page 2, appendix 3e). Particular words within these English language documents are marked with an asterisk with a note explaining: “These words are English names of organisations or other words that cannot be translated. Please ask an advice worker to explain what they mean” (page 2, appendix 3e). This implies that these documents are also translated, although it is not explicitly specified which languages are available. If asked by clients, staff are then expected to expand on the meaning of these implicitly culturally-specific terms. Asterisked words include: *UKBA, Choices, Discretionary Leave to Remain, Assisted Voluntary Return, VARRP, Reintegration Support, Start Card, Reintegration evidence, Refugee Action, Home Office, The Chief Executive, United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA), International Office of [sic] Migration (IOM), Social Services, Job Centre Plus, Department for Work and Pensions, Inland Revenue, UK Human Trafficking Centre, Smart Card.*

These terms have presumably been asterisked because longer explanations, or explications – “the technique of making explicit in the target text information that is implicit in the source text” (Baker 2001:80) – could not be accommodated in the limited space of the document, so are given verbally, if requested by the client. The explication hypothesis (Blum-Kulka 1986) proposes that translations will always be longer than the source text due to the need to explain information which is implicit in the source text. It

may also avoid the potential risk (Pym 2005) of the target audience misunderstanding key legal terms and actors in what is, essentially, a legal process.

Refugee Action's formalised orientation to AVR terminology as described above is innovative, and addresses a recognised problem regarding terminology, acknowledging that some clients may have difficulty understanding these terms which "refer to discrete conceptual entities, properties, activities or relations which constitute the knowledge space" (Baker 2001:261) of a particular field, in this case AVR.

Indicating potentially problematic lexical items and acronyms, and signposting the reader to the caseworker for an oral explanation (therefore strategically mode-switching from the outset), to some extent explicitly indicates the need for communications in more than one mode when communicating complex information in the AVR process. The inclusion of untranslated English AVR terminology within the translated text may also jar with the reader, acting as a foreignising strategy (Venuti 1998) which foregrounds that the texts are indeed translated. However, the approach is not uniform across AVR texts, and the burden of 'translating' these untranslatable terms is placed on the caseworker. Whether this oral explication is given in English or in another language (by the caseworker or an interpreter) is left to the caseworker to decide. Although a unique approach to terminology, ethnographic observation and on-site discussions with caseworkers suggest that they are rarely asked by clients to translate these terms, suggesting either clients already understand the terms, or that if they do not understand, they do not ask for clarification from staff.

Having introduced aspects of top-down written multilingualism in Refugee Action and IOM, I can now draw some conclusions about the (multilingual) context in which caseworkers are positioned to ensure clients make an informed decision.

6.2.2 Hierarchy of languages and primacy of written modality

When reviewing IOM and Refugee Action's top-down responses to linguistic diversity, differing hierarchies of languages are evident, though given the superdiversity of clients, they are somewhat inevitable in the context of a restricted (and ever-diminishing) operations budget. For example, in reference to information cards for AVRIM applicants for irregular migrants (Refugee Action 2015b), which are provided in ten languages, Refugee Action's website describes the function of the cards:

“These cards explain the Choices service for people without legal status from Bangladesh, India, China, Brazil, Pakistan, Latin America, the Philippines and Ukraine. They feature testimonies from people who have returned to those countries.” (Refugee Action website 2015)

This description excludes clients from these areas (and others) who are not literate in the nation-state languages of these countries. Blackledge and Creese argue that the “common-sense understanding of the relationship between language and nation ignores the diversity and variety of the language(s) spoken within many states” (2010:7). I do not assume that the organisations have this ‘common-sense understanding’ of one nation equals one language; they have perhaps selected the languages they regard are most widely spoken. Nevertheless, as Moyer finds in her study (2011), in such situations clients may be forced into using a lingua franca or a second language in order to access the information, or are perhaps restricted from accessing written information completely. For both institutions English takes primacy, being the language in which most administrative and institutional work is carried out, the language of most AVR texts, the language of IOM's website, the language of most emails, office notices and switchboard operators. Nation-state languages follow, with minority languages occupying the bottom of the hierarchy; others are excluded completely from the process.

Moyer also highlights the primacy of the *written* medium within institutional settings, specifically when implementing multilingualism in the clinic (her research site). She finds that information was provided in various languages “in written form reflecting the institutions’ assumption that migrants are literate and able to read” (Moyer,

2011:1212). She argues that in hierarchising languages and modalities, the institutions construct ““the other” as a literate and competent speaker of a nation-state language, which is often not the case” (2011:1211). This hierarchising of languages and modalities is also evident in Phillimore’s examination of perspectives on what she refers to as the “challenges of novelty and newness” in maternity services. She found that professionals lacked:

“cultural health capital to communicate with new migrants from non-traditional sending countries [migrants’ countries of origin] with novel, previously or rarely encountered cultural and linguistic features. While the system is set up to provide interpretation and translated materials for established migrant groups, professionals did not have ready access to these for new migrants” (2015:578).

The idea of novel and new challenges encapsulates the multiple literacies and languages that clients may have, recognising that some clients may perhaps speak languages that have no written form, or have different writing and speaking competencies within one language. As Moyer (2011) and Phillimore (2011) find, in this AVR context, different values are placed on the languages in the institutions’ lists of translated materials (appendices 4a and 4b) depending on the number and type of documents translated. Although it is evident that both institutions orient to the superdiversity of their clients, offering translation and interpreting services, as well as having staff with wide-ranging linguistic repertoires, the institutions appear to rely on a background assumption that clients will have, or should have, a basic understanding of English or a nation state/official language in order to access written AVR material. Of course this may be understandable in that both institutions have limited translation/communication budgets, and on-file translations into all languages are not financially feasible/practical. However, this institutional taking-for-granted that clients will be able to access information in the written modality and/or language (or will necessarily request assistance when they cannot) must then be negotiated by caseworkers in the disseminating of AVR information, in a pressurised context in which caseworkers are positioned by the institution as being responsible for clients’ ‘informed decision’ in what can be regarded as a life-changing move.

Having reviewed top-down institutional strategies for accommodating multilingualism, providing us with an understanding of the resources available to

caseworkers from each institution, the following section will look at how caseworkers negotiate written multilingualism.

6.3 How do caseworkers negotiate written multilingualism in AVR programmes for superdiverse clients?

This section explores how caseworkers question the assumptions in top-down multilingualism that clients are able to access AVR written materials. Barton states that “[e]very person...has a view of literacy, about what it is and what it can do for them, about its importance and its limitations” (2007:46). Multiple views of what literacy consists of are evident in this interview data. Different literacies are evident (and are explored) in the analysis via caseworkers’ representations of what ‘literacy’ and ‘literate’ mean in this context. In the following sub-sections, I examine how caseworkers negotiate top-down written multilingualism, exploring how they orient to clients’ linguistic resources and literacy practices. I argue that caseworkers’ self-reporting of *translanguaging* (defined in section 6.1.1) in our research interviews results from their evaluation that the language in the original mode is not accessible by the client due to conceptions they have about clients’ literacies. In this way, this chapter focuses on where literacies and modalities intersect. It is divided as follows:

- Section 6.3.1: caseworkers contesting construction of clients as literate in English, and mixing modalities (mode-switching) to increase epistemic access to AVR information in multilingual environment
- Section 6.3.2: caseworkers contesting construction of clients as literate in ‘native’ language/s, and mixing modalities (mode-switching) and languages (translanguaging) in order to increase epistemic access to AVR information in multilingual environment

The following section examines how some caseworkers contest institutional assumptions around clients’ literacies, and the primacy of the written format: by questioning, rejecting and at times devising unofficial multilingual and multimodal strategies to enable clients to access AVR information.

6.3.1 Caseworkers contesting institutional construction of clients as 'literate' in English

Both institutions take steps to respond to the superdiversity of AVR clients through multilingualism (discussed in section 6.2 above), and are at times particularly innovative. However, contrary to studies discussed earlier (in section 2.4.3), in which top-down decisions regarding multilingualism went unquestioned and superdiversity was not oriented to, caseworkers in this setting at times represent the institutional response as perhaps potentially constraining clients' understanding and ability to access information in this gatekeeping scenario. Some caseworkers display a keen awareness of the importance of linguistic resources and literacy practices in clients' access to information about AVR programmes. In this problematising of the top-down approach, caseworkers' creativity and criticality (Li 2011:1223) is evident, acknowledging that the written format is not always accessible for clients, questioning the implicit institutional construction of clients as 'literate' in a 'complete' or 'uniform' way. Thus, caseworkers' represent their choice of modality as based on the gap between clients' perceived linguistic repertoire (and individual resources), and the availability of top-down multilingual resources, what Maryns and Blommaert refer to as pretextual gaps (2002:12).

Rather than being explicitly raised in my questions, literacy is a topic which caseworkers introduced themselves, particularly (as may be anticipated) in response to questions about institutional information materials. Caseworkers from both institutions contested presuppositions implicit in institutional multilingualism, questioning the accuracy of the implicit construction of AVR clients as uniformly literate in English. In discussing useful AVR texts, Janice for example states, "I think the *Stories of Return* were useful in that it was quite nicely presented it had pictures and short stories and everything but if it's in somebody else's a different language it's a bit redundant" (lines 344-346, page 145, appendix 6c). This critique from caseworkers negatively evaluating the institutions' primacy of English, and implicitly challenging the institutional construction of clients as uniformly literate in English was common. The following section, however, will examine instances in which caseworkers specifically position themselves in relation to the AVR *application form*, which includes the *Declaration of Voluntary Return*; these were key texts raised by both myself and caseworkers.

To provide some context to the texts discussed in the interviews, the *Declaration of Voluntary Return* is a Home Office-controlled legal document, embedded in the AVR application form which AVR applicants and caseworkers must sign in order for the application to be processed and submitted by Refugee Action or IOM for approval from the Home Office. Neither IOM nor Refugee Action is able to edit the text on this form without permission from the Home Office.

The AVR application form can be wholly completed by the applicant, completed together in the presence of the caseworker, who may talk the client through it, or completed entirely by the caseworker and only signed by the applicant. IOM and Refugee Action staff are explicitly directed to explain the AVR form (including the declaration) to clients, counter-signing the form to signify that this explanation has been carried out.

Since the change in service-provider from IOM to Refugee Action, the text in the *Declaration of Voluntary Return* has been altered, with the first paragraph (directed at the caseworker/referring agency) being omitted. It appears that this paragraph, which functioned to direct the caseworker regarding their responsibilities, has been expanded and evolved into an additional, separate *Caseworker Declaration Form* (appendix 3d). The additional *Caseworker Declaration Form* states it “is to confirm that you [the Refugee Action caseworker] have explained what happens if they decide to apply for voluntary return. In other words, it ensures they have made an informed decision about voluntary return” (see appendix 3d). Furthermore, by signing the form, the caseworker confirms they “have explained the application form and the declaration of voluntary return to the applicant(s) in a language they understand” (appendix 3d). The form repeats in list format the legal implications of applying for AVR (already included in the *Declaration of Voluntary Return*) that clients must be aware of before they apply, and confirms that the client agrees that Refugee Action can assist them. Caseworkers are unable to submit the client’s AVR form to the Home Office if they have not also signed a *Caseworker Declaration*. Although both institutions require caseworkers to ensure clients understand the contents of the AVR application form (and declaration), in developing this second declaration, Refugee Action gives prominence to this step of the process, foregrounding the individual caseworker’s responsibility for it, while also formalising the institutional approach to multilingualism in their caseworkers’ work procedures and duties.

It is implicit in Refugee Action's approach that providing clients the information in a 'language they understand' (this can mean a language other than English) will 'ensure' the client has made an 'informed decision', employing the oral modality as a means of checking understanding. However, this relies on a number of assumptions regarding comprehension itself and the signalling of it, and positions the caseworker as being responsible for whether the decision is 'informed'. Refugee Action also provides a client-oriented information sheet about the legal consequences of return.

During the following excerpt Maria and I are looking at, and talking about, different documents in Refugee Action's AVR application pack. In line 1, I pull out the AVR application form which includes the 'Declaration of Voluntary Return' as discussed above, which clients must sign in order to apply for AVR:

Excerpt 1: "...I don't know necessarily if they've understood it..."

Maria (Refugee Action), appendix 6c:

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | K | and um so you say most of your clients can complete it for themselves I was just |
| 2. | | wondering about the declaration (looks for form) |
| 3. | M | this form |
| 4. | K | yeah |
| 5. | M | yeah |
| 6. | K | yeah um how how much do you think people kind of understand that or um |
| 7. | M | they tend to understand that |
| 8. | K | yeah |
| 9. | M | cos they always say they always fill it in I've never had a problem with this form not |
| 10. | | being filled in |
| 11. | K | OK |
| 12. | M | I don't know necessarily if they've understood it but I know that they've filled it in |
| 13. | | and signed it |
| 14. | K | completed and signed it |
| 15. | M | and that is the UKBA approval |

Excerpt 1 illustrates how Maria doubts her presupposition that clients understand the forms. In this excerpt Maria initially tentatively (through "tend") positions the client as able to "understand" (line 7) the AVR application form (see form declaration in appendix 3b) because they have signed it, perhaps presupposing that had the client not understood it, they might ask for an explanation if they felt it was needed. Yet in lines 12-13 Maria

problematizes this simple view of literacy by working through her own presuppositions in the interview itself (validating a constructionist approach in that this interview data is *new* data, producing and constructing knowledge, rather than reflecting caseworker practice). Maria is self-reflexive and questions her own understanding of what a client's signature means, recognising that simply because someone has *signed* the form it does not mean they can read and understand it. In Li's terms, Maria can be considered as displaying criticality (2011a:1223) in considering and questioning the "received wisdom" (2011a:1223) of what a signature might mean. In doing so, Maria distinguishes reading from writing, and implicitly raises the issue of multiple literacies and competences, representing *completing the form* as distinct from *understanding the content*. This acknowledges that competences in linguistic resources within a repertoire will not necessarily be uniform (Blommaert and Backus 2013). As Moyer states (in regard to her clinic setting):

"Institutional reliance on the written medium to provide information is related to the ideology which holds that problems in communication are best addressed through the development of written materials. It is also taken for granted that migrant clients are literate and will be able to understand the information provided in written form. This has the effect of excluding some individuals from gaining access to [health] resources" (2011:1214)

In excerpt 1 we can see how Maria clarifies her position on what signing means, ultimately appearing to agree with Barton who argues that "[w]e should be careful of using signatures as measures of literacy...", in that "[b]eing able to sign one's name is only one definition of literacy" (2007:127). However in this instance, Refugee Action's *top-down* institutional approach also questions any assumption that signing (or writing) signifies understanding or ability to read in a particular language. This is achieved via the organisation's policy that caseworkers must sign the 'Caseworker Declaration' which asks caseworkers to explain the form. Although this is not unproblematic in itself, in that caseworkers may struggle to ascertain whether the language selected for the interaction is one which clients "understand" (e.g. Maryns queries how the language of interaction is chosen in asylum interviews, 2006:201), it does represent top-down institutional awareness of how the bureaucratic procedure may constrain clients' linguistic resources.

Refugee Action in this sense attempts to ensure that clients understand the consequences of their signing the AVR form, assuming responsibility for this understanding by officially proposing translanguaging (as discussed in section 6.1.1) (if deemed necessary by the caseworker), combining the functions of a verbal explanation in another language, with the legal action of writing/signing in English. In this situation the information may be translated by an interpreter into a clients' language, to complement the written information in English (translations of the declaration were available in few other languages). So within the official response there is both mode-switching in terms of modality (from written to spoken), and translanguaging in terms of language (from English to the clients' chosen language). Excerpt 1 exemplifies then how – in contrast with Moyer (2011), and Codó and Garrido's (2010) findings – AVR caseworkers *do* display criticality and challenge assumptions, even their own.

In my research interview, Maria questions the institutional value placed on the use of English and written materials constructing the institutional process as working best (or designed) for someone from an English-speaking country. For example, later (in reference to another client) she specifically challenges the status quo of the language hierarchy and the institutional bias towards English, by acknowledging that it is easier for clients to succeed in completing an AVR form if their "first language" is English: "...and then she got the money but um she signed the form really well because it was you know English is her first language" (lines 328-329, page 183, appendix 6c). Her questioning of the primacy of English evaluates AVR programmes and texts as disadvantaging clients due to institutional presuppositions about clients' literacy in English (as an additional language).

In their analysis of bureaucratic constructions of clienthood in client-institution encounters, Sarangi and Slembrouck argue that "bureaucracies conduct their routine work with certain client types in mind, which may vary according to the nature of the contact situation" (1996:123). Although perhaps to be anticipated, it does imply that those who do not have English within their linguistic repertoire are disadvantaged in completing their paperwork, positioning the institution as having an 'ideal' client type who has English as a 'mother tongue'. By representing the institution as having an 'ideal client', Maria positions the institution as a 'centering institution' (Silverstein 1998:404), which can define the "'central values' of a group or system" (Blommaert 2005:75), e.g. the 'ideal

client' being English-speaking and able to read English. As Blommaert states, "[t]he centring function is *attributive*: it generates indexicalities to which others have to orient in order to be 'social', i.e. to produce meanings that 'belong' somewhere" (2005:75). In this way, the institutional client type normalises certain clients who can speak and read English, disadvantaging clients who have linguistic repertoires different to this perceived and expected 'norm'.

Sarangi and Slembrouck, in their examination of information exchange in bureaucratic settings, remind us that bureaucrats are not "passive agents" (1996:37), and that "bureaucrats have to decide whether to advertise or volunteer information without being asked to or to give information only on request and whether that information should be given in writing or not" (1996:38). However, Refugee Action's method of talking through the written information, as designated in its top-down approach is often explicitly oriented to by Refugee Action caseworkers, and framed as an obligation/duty. For example, Lena discusses here the process she goes through to inform clients about the legal consequences of return (detailed in an information sheet provided by Refugee Action, see appendix 3c):

Excerpt 2: "...we'll send it but then we really have to talk with them about it..."

Lena (Refugee Action), appendix 6c:

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | L | I raise the legal consequences right at the initial assessment time and afterwards I |
| 2. | | have another conversation with the client and I have to sign a form? [K: uhuh] saying |
| 3. | | that I've spoken about legal consequences? |
| 4. | K | oh right yeah I think I saw that in there yep |
| 5. | L | yeah so I have to sign that so occasionally we we if we get the application posted to |
| 6. | | us or sent by fax we'll send it without talking about the legal consequences then we |
| 7. | | have to do it immediately afterwards |
| 8. | K | oh OK |
| 9. | L | as soon afterwards so for example if the client posted but we can't contact them by |
| 10. | | phone for a couple of days we'll send it but then we really have to talk with them |
| 11. | | about it? |
| 12. | K | oh OK |
| 13. | L | so we have- sign that form it has to be done |

In this excerpt Lena represents her action of talking to the client about the legal consequences of return as a top-down enforced duty. Her repeated representation of this action as enforceable from above and a top-down decision is evident in line 2 in “I have to sign a form”, in lines 6-7 in “have to do it”, line 10 in “but then we really have to....”, and again in line 13 “it has to be done”. In this way Lena is explicitly categorising the action of providing a verbal explanation of the legal consequences as an essential element of the official (top-down) institutional process, valuing in this instance the specific functions of the verbal modality. She displays that she *could* send the information to the client and not explain it, but acknowledges that the correct thing to do is to follow protocol and explain the information verbally (“but then we really...”, line 10). Via modalisation, Lena is here displaying *criticality*, demonstrating her “ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour” (Li 2013:1223). In this way she represents this mixing of modalities – the print information combined with the oral explanation – as the institutional norm, which she follows.

This sense of ‘duty’ to provide AVR information in an institutionally-sanctioned way is also displayed by Quinn when discussing the extent of clients’ knowledge about the programmes prior to visiting the offices: “but sometimes it seems like they did like they’d already heard it before but then it’s still our duty to go through it all again” (lines 236-237, page 272, appendix 6c). Quinn is wary of making false interpretations of clients’ non-verbal contextualisation cues (Gumperz, 1982). Gumperz argued that we cannot take shared conditions for understanding contextualisation cues for granted; we do not necessarily interpret these signs in the same way as our interactants do, and by assuming that we do, we may encounter communication difficulties. Quinn displays awareness of this, and the potential differences in communicative repertoires and the possibility that mis-interpreting “nodding” (line 235, page 272, appendix 6c) to signify comprehension may result in clients not receiving the information they need before return. As such Quinn takes a very literal interpretation of the institutional guidelines, aligning with the institutional approach that certain AVR information is provided by default, rather than on a demand basis, with the assumption that the client has no prior knowledge. This acknowledges the possibility of outdated (or gaps in) knowledge.

What is noteworthy about Lena and Quinn’s data above is that caseworkers’ individual decisions about how these specific pieces of information (these legal

consequences) are communicated to clients are oriented to differently by Refugee Action and IOM staff. Refugee Action caseworkers in interviews orient to the provision of information in the AVR form and declaration in both written and oral modalities as a *duty*, as the unmarked course of action to take. The top-down decision to create the *Caseworker Declaration*, with bulleted information points which must be communicated to clients, provides a reformulation of the legal implications, essentially offering official wording to assist in caseworkers' explanation. In this sense, the Refugee Action caseworkers' participant role (Goffman 1981) is that of animator, articulating the words of the institution. Further to documenting whether the information has been adequately explained to the client, the *Caseworker Declaration* functions to reiterate to the caseworker that this task is their responsibility to 'ensure' this. IOM's AVR form, however, includes a bolded paragraph above the body of the AVR form's text, which is addressed to "IOM STAFF/PARTNERS" and reads:

"Each individual who may be considered/be eligible for IOM voluntary return assistance must be able to understand and consider the content of this form before signing. Please allow the individual to read the form (or ensure it can be translated in a language understood by the applicant) and explain it before asking him/her to sign the voluntary declaration"

(IOM AVR application form REV 01-2011).

Through this paragraph IOM initially appears to place the responsibility for understanding the form with the client ("Each individual...must"). The responsibility then shifts to the institutional representative, through implicature in the official instruction for them to "explain" the form, before "asking" clients to sign it. The space for the caseworker's counter-signature on the form then implies that in counter-signing, the caseworker confirms they have adhered to this direction and 'explained' the form.

IOM does not provide any text or direction to assist in explaining the form, unlike Refugee Action (described above). The introductory paragraph implies that the caseworker must ascertain the client's linguistic competencies, and as such whether the client requires the text to be translated. Although it states that the text must be "translated" if needed, it does not explicitly specify the modality. From experience working in this environment and from ethnographic observation at IOM offices, the

declaration is usually interpreted (in oral mode), rather than translated (in written mode) into another language, due to a lack of availability of translations of the declaration. In this sense, although the written format takes primacy in the provision of AVR, the oral modality is officially employed as a means of checking understanding: the literacy event of signing the application form in some sense relying on the oral modality. Although clients may understand the content of the form during the interaction while it is verbally explained to them, because it may not be available in the written modality (other than in English), they will not be able to benefit from the specific functions of that modality (e.g. for future reference).

Although IOM also officially require caseworkers to “allow” clients to read the form and to explain it to applicants before asking them to sign it, IOM staff do not orient to this process/responsibility in the interviews to the same extent as Refugee Action staff. IOM’s participant role differs to that of Refugee Action in this situation because IOM staff may more often have to construct the explanations themselves, rather than use an official institutional check list (such as Refugee Action’s ‘Caseworker Declaration’). As such the IOM caseworker’s participant role may change from animator (articulating the words within the ‘Declaration of Voluntary Return’) to author (Goffman 1981), articulating in their own words explanations of its content. In this way, as Rock finds in her analysis of police officers explaining the caution, caseworkers are recontextualising the information in that they “transfer meaning from the written text into a new context which they come to constitute by establishing expectations, commenting on the source text and confirming or challenging it” (2010:130).

IOM caseworkers who do orient to the provision of this information, however, do not represent it as a duty, rather as something that caseworkers can choose to do, to a greater or lesser extent, perhaps reflecting their participant role as author rather than animator. Isabel for example, in response to the elicitation, “...take me through how a client would ideally plan their reintegration assistance when planning for return?” (lines 359-360, page 133, appendix 6c), responds that AVR information “was really clearly understood before they decided to go...home” (lines 407-408, page 134, appendix 6c), implying with “really” that it might not always be. In describing her ideal process to reach this goal she suggests that “it would have to part of the process of...I don’t know ‘I’m going to read five statements to you’ or something...one of them that ‘you will not be able to

re-enter the country for five years' or something" (lines 417-419, page 134, appendix 6c). In using the term "process" she implies that this ought to be a required part of the institutional process, rather than left to the decision of the caseworker of how to articulate it and how much to include, much like Refugee Action's official approach (initiated a few months later), as detailed above. Isabel represents this as a type of verbal commitment: "so that they can think what's happening now in [country 1] is what I was told would happen in the UK" (lines 429-430, page 134, appendix 6c). This proposed process reflects Isabel's orientation to the possible reasons why someone may not have been able to make an informed decision about return, and implicitly challenges the construct of clients as 'literate' in English/native language/s; with her focus on the spoken word through "read... to you" and "told". Like Maria, she also challenges the assumption that because clients have signed the form, they have read it: "but I don't know whether they always read the declaration fully" (lines 416-417, page 134, appendix 6c). Isabel suggests addressing this by reading information aloud from a check list for each client, and in doing so she values a systematic approach to providing oral information in order to complement a literacy event. Although of course it is difficult to know whether the client *has* understood (see Rock, 2007:207) for a discussion of why people may claim to understand but be unable to demonstrate it), however, she foregrounds the oral medium as more likely to give both caseworker and client the confidence that understanding has been achieved. In this sense, like other caseworkers she displays criticality (Li 2011a:1233) by considering the value of different formats for clients who may have differing linguistic repertoires. Isabel displays resourcefulness or *creativity* not in flouting rules, but in going beyond what is officially endorsed in top-down multilingualism, and proposing further steps to the process to aid comprehension of AVR information amongst clients and to increase epistemic access. Isabel's idealised representation of moving between modalities can be regarded as mode-switching for multilingual purposes (or broadly translanguaging), strategically subverting the (institutional) norms of modality choices to enable clients to access AVR information in this institutional environment.

Further to displaying criticality in questioning institutional multilingualism regarding top-down institutional reliance on English in AVR written texts, and creativity in representing translanguaging or mode-switching as a possible route around this,

caseworkers also challenged assumptions about clients' literacy levels in the language/s of their country of return, as shall be examined in the following section.

6.3.2 Caseworkers contesting institutional construction of clients' literacy in language/s of the country of return

As in section 6.3.1, this section examines how caseworkers orient to top-down multilingualism. However, here we focus on situations in which the institution *has* translated AVR information into other languages. Again, caseworkers display criticality in their consideration of whether translations are helpful for all clients, and display creativity in their representation of mode-switching for multilingual purposes when flouting the institution's rules or norms of language and behaviour (Li, 2011a:1223), and strategically employing a different modality.

In the excerpt below Lena raises the topic of literacy, a topic she often orients to in the research interview. She responds to a much earlier question I asked: "do you find there's anything ... difficult or frustrating about the role [of caseworker]" (lines 153-154):

Excerpt 3: "...a lot of a lot of my clients have low literacy or and sometimes no literacy in their own language..."

Lena (Refugee Action), appendix 6c:

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | L | ... you mentioned earlier one of what are the m- problems I find with the programme I |
| 2. | | think one of the things that's really concerning me is literacy [K: uhuh] so um a lot of a |
| 3. | | lot of my clients have low literacy or and sometimes no literacy in their own language? |
| 4. | K | oh right |
| 5. | L | so even the reintegration information that I give them you know they'll say you know 'I |
| 6. | | can't read [language 7]' and |
| 7. | K | so even if it's in [language 7]? |
| 8. | L | yeah but then um the last time that happened I still gave them the reintegration |
| 9. | | [K: yeah] information and you know someone else can read it to them [K: ah OK] |
| 10. | | so it just it means it's there for them if they need [K: yeah] some clarification |
| 11. | | [5 lines omitted] |
| 12. | L | um I think it's yeah so that's tricky because you're working with people on the phone |
| 13. | | and by distance so you're sending them letters [K: yeah] you have to keep letters really |
| 14. | | really simple [K: OK] and talk things through a lot |

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 15. K | and do you er with um the letters do you ever have to get them translated or do you just |
| 16. | kind of - sorry (()) |
| 17. L | no (exhales) I don't I don't get them translated um - sometimes the letters I mean they |
| 18. | sort of they don't know exactly what's in the letter but they know I want to talk with |
| 19. | them |
| 20. K | oh OK |
| 21. L | so then they'll call me and so that's that can be useful if I'm trying to get in touch with |
| 22. | them |
| 23. K | OK yeah that's interesting (laughs) |
| 24. L | yeah (laughs) yeah |
| 25. K | they just kinda see the logo and think gotta call [Lena] |
| 26. L | yeah that's it |

Both Lena (Refugee Action) and Frank (IOM) (discussed below) represent literacy as a key obstacle when providing information to clients from this particular country. In lines 3-4 Lena frames the problem as not only about clients' inability to understand documents in English, but also in the clients' own language. She represents literacy here as a set of skills (adopting an autonomous model of literacy, regarding it as a technical and neutral set of skills (Street 1984)), and existing on a spectrum ("low literacy" line 3). In this way she contests the institutional construction of clients as literate in the language of the country of return, recognising that clients' linguistic resources are not uniformly ordered within their linguistic repertoires (that is, because a client can speak a language, they can read it). By representing herself as concerned about this topic – with the marker "really" (line 2) and the use of "I" and "me" pronouns – Lena implies that this is something the institution and few other caseworkers are concerned about, portraying her approach as an individual one. In this way she distances herself from the institutional – and the implied conventional – response, displaying criticality in problematising "received wisdom" (Li, 2013:1223) within AVR programmes.

Lena's use of "even" in "so even the reintegration information that I give them..." (line 6) evaluates reintegration information as important to understand, and/or displays surprise that they cannot access it in their own language. This implicitly negatively evaluates top-down multilingualism as inadequate in addressing the superdiversity of clients and their needs. Barton argues that the functions of written or spoken modalities are different, and that our choice of modality "usually has other implications beyond a simple choice of medium" (2007: 42). This is undoubtedly the case with Lena, who reports

using translated written information as a back-up (“for clarification”, line 11) to the verbal information she provides (lines 8-9), presupposing that someone else will be able to read the information to her client (line 9), as a type of ‘mediator of literacy’ (Baynham 1997), if the client cannot read it themselves. In this way she positively evaluates the functions of the written modality (e.g. for reference or ‘contract’), in the event there the client would make use of it, orienting to this crucial linguistic resource of a type of community/shared literacy (Barton 2007:62). Her use of “the last time” in line 9 implies that her approach is fluid, and that she adapts her approach depending on the client and context. Lena’s reference to keeping letters “really really simple” in lines 13-14 treats this as unproblematic, presupposing that this “simple” language would be appropriate for each client and that, as Solomon suggests (1996) in an examination of presuppositions within the Plain English campaign, she would know what language style they would find “simple”. However, Lena reports sending letters in English to function, at the very least, as *prompts* for clients with “low literacy” to call her, rather than as a medium to share information (lines 18-19), bringing in the symbolic visual and numeric (in phone numbers) mediums of literacy. Although not oriented to by caseworkers in interviews, this is a communicative method I have also seen IOM staff using during ethnographic observations. Her reference to “talk[ing] things through a lot” in line 14 represents her approach as integrating the written word (with its particular functions) with the spoken word, translanguaging as she deems appropriate. Lena further suggests officially providing information about the process in a film or a YouTube clip because “...if they don’t have access to the written word but they will they will be watching TV...” (lines 1190-1191, page 175, appendix 6c). Although it is not apparent whether Lena is representing switching languages as well as modalities (as she does not specify what language her proposed video would be in), again here she values the complementariness of modalities, translanguaging (or, specifically, mode-switching) to engage with clients who are otherwise unable to access AVR information.

We have seen here how Lena evaluates the use of different modalities, and mode-switches, depending on her conceptions of clients’ multilingual literacies, and top-down multilingualism. Creese and Blackledge (2010) observe that translanguaging is used in classrooms to involve people (amongst other functions); it has a similar role in this AVR setting – to engage applicants with AVR information. This reported behaviour can be

regarded as an unofficial caseworker-led approach, to surmount the limitations of top-down institutional multilingualism. This demonstrates caseworkers positioning the problem as both a client problem in that clients are positioned as lacking language skills, but also an institutional (hence environmental) one, reflecting the environmental model of multilingualism (Blommaert *et al.* 2005), in that it is the *institutions'* responsibility to respond to multilingualism amongst clients.

When discussing AVR literature, Quinn also challenges the institutional presupposition of a 'literate' client, questioning the assumption that all clients can read the language of their country of return (line 6), positioning this as shared knowledge ("obviously", line 6).

Excerpt 4: "...um obviously not everybody ... reads..."

Quinn (Refugee Action), appendix 6c:

1.	K	regarding the information that Refugee Action produces is there anything that p- find
2.		particularly useful when kind of talking to clients or when or in your previous role
3.	Q	um yeah um:: well we would um: give them a copy of the legal consequences to the
4.		programme in their own language [K: OK] so we'd explain it um through if they don't
5.		speak English through an interpreter [K: uhuh] and then we'd tell them um um you
6.		know 'I can give you a copy in your own language' um obviously not everybody is reads
7.		um but I think it's better that someone has it than not has it [K: yeah] cos you know they
8.		might have a friend that can read it out to them if they forget something um: so that
9.		that was really useful
10.	K	OK

Moyer writes that "[i]t is also true ... that written materials allow the spatial and temporal dis-embedding of information, and migrants can also get help from their social network outside the institution" (2011:1214). Like Moyer (2011), Quinn still values written information as it's "better that someone has it than not has it" (line 7), perhaps orienting to other functions of the written modality relating to legalities and trust, and due to its permanence, its use for confirmation and reminding purposes, and the potential to be accessed at some point. Referring implicitly to the idea of a 'shared' literacy (in line 8) in which clients may read texts with friends or family, Quinn's reported approach here

echoes Lena's in excerpt 3, where the written modality was used as a reinforcement of the oral modality. In this way, due to the inevitable budgetary restrictions with the institution unable to translate all AVR documents in all languages, when providing written AVR information, Quinn and other caseworkers are positioned by the institution as having to rely on this assumption that clients will find someone to read it to them. Although of course this happens – and it is a well-documented literacy practice (Barton, 2007:62) – not all applicants necessarily have close friends/family they are willing to share this AVR information with or who are able to read. Indeed the topic of AVR and return can be stigmatised, so relying on this method of communication and assuming clients have been able to understand the text may limit clients' ability to prepare for return.

In discussing what he finds frustrating about his job, like Lena and Quinn, Frank also challenges the institutional construction of a 'literate' client, implicitly negatively evaluating IOM's multilingualism:

Excerpt 5: "...don't forget our guys are illiterate"

Frank (IOM) appendix 6c:

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | F | (()) maybe there's other things and don't forget our guys are illiterate |
| 2. | K | oh right |
| 3. | F | a lot of illiterates |
| 4. | K | oh really |
| 5. | F | [line regarding specific historic events of country omitted for anonymisation] |
| 6. | K | ah right |
| 7. | F | the poor classes become destitute totally destitute |
| 8. | K | oh right |
| 9. | F | so all the people come here during eighty - up to ninety it is destitute people destitute |
| 10. | | generation |
| 11. | K | yeah |
| 12. | F | no education at all so that's the reason when you I mean again I talk too much Katy |
| 13. | | (laughs) |
| 14. | | when I talk ten minute with somebody [K: yeah] I definitely know if the the education of |
| 15. | | this person [K: oh really] if he's illiterate or not |
| 16. | K | oh OK |
| 17. | F | but the question he asked me about Heathrow never heard Heathrow what's the |
| 18. | | postcode of Heathrow because I was child I heard I know this Heathrow [K: yeah] |
| 19. | | (()) I mean really really like basic information |
| 20. | K | so they? OK |
| 21. | F | they haven't so I know this person is is er illiterate without question if the coach |

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 22. | | station is not there |
| 23. | K | yeah OK |
| 24. | F | 'if they closed coach station tonight the problem is I have a ticket what can I do' |
| 25. | K | mm |
| 26. | F | only if you are educated if you have basic [K: yeah] you don't ask these question |
| 27. | K | OK |
| 28. | F | all this question that we pay price for because they are illiterate |

While Frank's representation of clients echoes Lena's above, suggesting that some clients from this country of origin (which is also his own) are "illiterates" (line 3), Frank blames the historical environment – the political situation these clients faced when growing up (line 7), thereby representing it more as a deficiency in the clients' linguistic repertoire rather than the a deficiency in the local (AVR) environment, although these are not mutually exclusive. Frank conflates clients' literacy in lines 14-19 to clients' cultural understanding of the UK, using 'literacy' as shorthand for knowing specific cultural pieces of information about the UK, which he assumes people would know if they had had an education in their country of origin. For Frank in this context, literacy is synonymous with being "educated" (line 26) and highly acculturated to British life. Like Lena, Frank is explicit in representing some of his clients as unable to read or write, representing them as disadvantaged by their own background.

But unlike Lena, Frank represents clients as burdening institutional staff with their many questions as a result of their inability to read AVR information: "all this question that we pay price for because they are illiterate" (line 28). His use of the pronoun "we" in line 28 and the framing of the problem as something that all staff must deal with contrasts with Lena's (excerpt 5) framing of the problem as something she addresses alone. Frank later negatively evaluates the use of written AVR information for his clients, evaluating the letters which are sent out in three languages to his clients before they depart as "useless" because he still receives "the same questions" (lines 19, appendix 6c). In doing so, Frank challenges the institutional primacy of written information, as well as the institutional construction of a literate client. Again although Frank represents this reliance on oral information over written as his preferred default approach for clients, he represents it as a burden for staff: "so our task is ...all the time tell them tell again and again" (line 243, page 81, appendix 6c), repeating information which is sent in the letter. Frank's foregrounding of the clients' not understanding the letters suggests that he does

not make use of or rely on 'shared' literacy where friends/family could be pursued to read out the information. Frank's certainty via his categorisation in categorising some of his clients as having no literacy in "a lot of illiterates" (line 3) represents literacy as *total* or singular, rather than a scale, as Maria does. Frank and Maria's differing conceptions of literacy perhaps relate to how they use AVR literature: a scalar metaphor encourages Maria to use AVR written texts as a back-up (just in case), while Frank's totalising concept of literacy perhaps suggests he may regard letters and perhaps all written information as being either useful or useless in increasing clients' epistemic access/knowledge about AVR, and little in between.

Like other caseworkers, Frank displays criticality here; however, in doing so, he represents his switching between modalities to communicate AVR information as not a strategic choice but as being forced by the combination of the institutional environment and the contextual background of the clients. Instead he displays his frustration that the impermanence of the spoken modality means he has to keep repeating information. In this sense, this excerpt questions the appropriateness of the term translanguageing for this situation, a term which is traditionally regarded as describing *positive* strategic use of linguistic systems.

Further to Frank representing himself as being positioned by the clients to provide information in a particular modality (oral) due to clients' linguistic repertoires, it is evident that caseworkers' strategic use of modality can be complex: other caseworkers also represent themselves as selecting different modalities for communicative goals which are *not* principally related to improving clients' epistemic access. Therefore they represent themselves mode-switching for *non-multilingual* purposes; as such the catalysts for and effects of mode-switching are complex and multifaceted. Caseworkers also represent their strategic choice of modalities (either written or spoken, depending on the context) as a way of engendering trust with superdiverse clients (line 483, page 84, appendix 6c), as a way of avoiding being challenged (lines 234-237, page 115, appendix 6c), and as a less time-consuming method of communication (lines 164-165, page 23, appendix 6c). Of course choosing a modality may be driven by a complex combination of these factors, and it may have multiple functions, illustrating that electing a modality (and often, as a result, a language) is a complex issue, related not only to clients' perceived needs and the availability of institutional resources, but also to caseworkers' workloads and conceptions

around trust. By recognising that caseworkers represent mixing modalities for reasons apparently not related to increasing epistemic access, we can further explore how people may adopt a translanguaging approach for other functions, away from the original pedagogical utility (Creese and Blackledge 2010), with its emphasis on language-learning and epistemic access. This demonstrates that decisions around modalities in multilingual encounters are complex, and that in examining mode-switching and translanguaging, we should take care not to make assumptions about client-oriented or multilingual motives behind the process.

In this section we have seen how caseworkers have questioned and adapted official institutional responses to linguistic diversity by deconstructing the *ideal* 'literate' client; we have seen how caseworkers represent themselves as using a repertoire of modes in order to make the best use of functions from differing modalities, employing mode-switching for multilingual purposes. The following section examines how caseworkers represent clients as orienting differently to texts in literacy events within the programme. I use the receipts process to show how caseworkers display awareness of clients' institutional literacy and the context of their sociocultural knowledge. The focus on receipts forms a case study of one particular literacy event (purchasing items with reintegration assistance) and how this is negotiated.

6.4 Caseworkers negotiating literacy practices: problematising receipts

In this section I explore how caseworkers consider and devise their own individual communicative-linguistic strategies to negotiate the institutional system. Using Barton and Hamilton's definition of literacy practices as "the general cultural ways of utilising written languages which people draw upon in their lives" (2000:7), in the analysis below, some caseworkers display an awareness of the implications of superdiversity in clients' literacy practices. Caseworkers' resourcefulness, or creativity (Li 2011a:1223), in their work, functions to bridge the gap between the top-down imposed institutional environment, and clients perceived linguistic resources. In this sense, caseworkers orient both to clients' literacies (as discussed above) but also to clients' *institutional literacy* – that is, their knowledge of institutional processes, bureaucracy and norms regarding

literacy events. The term *literacy event* is used to describe any occasion “in everyday life where the written word has a role” (Barton, 2007:3), and is regarded as a social practice, manifested in written form.

This section is concerned with the particular literacy event, which takes place after return, of purchasing equipment or services, and the practice and format of providing a receipt, which clients are required to obtain in order to be financially reimbursed by the institution. To give some context to the receipts process; upon return, Refugee Action clients are able to use AVR funds to set up a small business, return to education or find a job placement. Many applicants choose to set up a small business – it can be a relatively quick way of achieving a regular sustainable income (a key goal of the programme). In order to access the financial assistance, however, clients are expected to buy the equipment/produce/business items up-front themselves, and submit the receipts (by fax) for these items to Refugee Action to get reimbursed for the cash. This system can be difficult for some to navigate, as not everybody has the capital to buy the goods up front in the first place. As a result, clients may resort to using the £500 cash they received at the airport to pay for items up front, and then get reimbursed. This is not ideal, as the £500 cash is made available to clients for other, more immediate expenses, such as food, essential clothes, other emergency items and gifts for family/friends. These types of items contribute to distinguishing AVR from forced return, and the stigma associated with it. At any rate, without the receipts, clients cannot access the funds allocated to them for reintegration. The bureaucratic demand of receiving the receipt *before* the funds are released to clients began when the AVR contract transferred from IOM to Refugee Action; the IOM procedure allowed for the institution to make ‘targeted payments’ to equipment suppliers or services such as colleges, businesses and schools, thus avoiding the problem of obtaining a receipt before the payee receives payment. As such, IOM caseworkers did not need to orient to this topic and for this reason, this section focuses on Refugee Action interviews only.

This section examines how literacy is used in everyday institutional life (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič, 2005:35) by examining how caseworkers orient to such literacy events and practices. Barton states that a literacy event is “particular to a specific community at a specific point in history” (2007:3). This localising of the event is essential to understanding the difficulties reported by the caseworkers, and the ways in which they

negotiate the process of receipts. As Blommaert argues, “[t]exts may travel easily, but the system of use, value and function in which they were produced usually does not travel with them” (2008:6).

Following Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič (2005), I suggest that the institution (and its funders) position caseworkers as bureaucratic representatives, regulating how clients produce receipts on return. I show, however, that caseworkers also resist this positioning, acting as *literacy mediators* (Jones 2005) to better enable clients to access crucial funds by creating their own procedures to get around different literacy practices around receipts.

In the interviews, Refugee Action caseworkers orient to problems related to the process of providing receipts, challenging the institution’s expectation (as dictated by the Home Office) that clients are able to easily produce receipts after return. Caseworkers question top-down institutional presuppositions that clients have knowledge of what an institutionally acceptable form of receipt is; and that literacy practices around receipts manifest in a stable way globally. Maryns and Blommaert argue that linguistic inequality can be viewed as “based on the notions of pretextuality – preconditions for communication that influence communicative behaviour – and pre-textual gaps – differences in such pre-conditions between participants in communication” (2002:12). This notion is useful here when examining how caseworkers orient to different literacy practices and the problems they cite in research interviews when communicating AVR information. The process of accessing the financial reintegration assistance for clients can be regarded as being hindered by pre-textual gaps. In this AVR setting, gaps exist between the bureaucratic demands of the institutions (or Home Office) via receipts/documentation, and clients’ linguistic resources and associated abilities to produce such receipts/documentation. Maryns argues that “[p]retextual differences have to be compensated in interaction for understanding to be achieved” (2006:7): it is this compensation which caseworkers seek and achieve via their mediation of this literacy event. The following analysis of how caseworkers orient to the literacy event of providing a receipt enables us to explore how institutional power (and the use of a rigid receipts process) may affect clients and their ability to reintegrate upon return.

In the following excerpt, Orla having raised the issue of receipts, challenges the assumptions in the AVR process that receipts are a stable category (Barton, Hamilton and

Ivanič 2005) around the world. She responds to my question regarding this specific receipt process – “do you think they [the clients] understand the process of that kind of receipt” (lines 515, page 228, appendix 6c) – by claiming that clients “have a really good idea [of the process] before they leave the UK” (lines 522-523, page 228, appendix 6c), but then goes on to discuss the receipt itself:

Excerpt 6: “...I’d give you a goat to show that you’ve paid...”

Orla (Refugee Action), appendix 6c:

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | O | ... in some parts of different countries they don’t have the facility for giving you a receipt |
| 2. | | for something [K: yeah] you know it’d be sort of much more on a almost bartering |
| 3. | | system [K: yeah] like ‘I’d give you a goat to show that you’ve paid for what it is’ but you |
| 4. | | can’t really send that back to Refugee Action you know [laughing] |
| 5. | K | fax it over |
| 6. | O | yeah for the receipt to be approved so um I think there are a lot of obstacles put in the |
| 7. | | way that come from quite a almost red tape bureaucratic [K: OK] ‘we need these boxes |
| 8. | | to be ticked’ sort of things [K: yeah] which limits what people can do and the |
| 9. | | accessibility of the money once they return |
| 10. | K | OK |
| 11. | O | um and I think that’s a shame because I think people should be trusted with the money |
| 12. | | cos we trust our clients to you know we give them that five hundred pounds at the |
| 13. | | airport which is great [K: yeah] and we don’t need the receipts for it but I don’t see why |
| 14. | | the full amount can’t be given like that |
| 15. | K | mm OK |
| 16. | O | but that’s a personal opinion not necessarily the view of Refugee Action |

In line 1 of this excerpt Orla raises the possibility that some clients may not be able to provide receipts for their purchases due to the different ‘environment’ in which clients’ purchases are made in the country of return. Orla represents the text around the literacy event (the obtaining and passing on of receipt) as occurring in a localised way, specifying that this may vary even within countries. Her example of a goat in line 3 to represent a type of receipt exoticises the receipt process in other countries by using something so culturally distant from the UK process. However, her humour in lines 3-4 functions to vividly foreground the difficulty clients have in attempting to insert their disembedded experience of this social event into the bureaucratic AVR procedure in the UK. In this way

Orla represents clients as being disadvantaged by the programme and the “red tape...bureaucratic ‘we need these boxes to be ticked’ sort of things” (line 7-8) of the institution, which she explicitly states limits how people can use the financial assistance upon return (lines 8-9). Orla distances herself from this approach by using ‘Refugee Action’ in line 4 rather than the alternative ‘us’. She also passivizes “approved” in line 6 to disassociate herself from the authorising process, implying the decision to approve (and hence the request for) the receipt comes from above, implying perhaps the Home Office or a different team. Orla classifies this bureaucratic process as a manifestation of the institution’s lack of trust (in line 11), which she explicitly distances herself from in line 16, after framing as contradictory the institution’s ability to trust clients to spend the £500 cash appropriately, but not the financial assistance provided in the country of origin. In this excerpt then we can see how Orla challenges the fixed idea the institution (acting under the Home Office’s instruction) has of what the literacy process of a receipt means, and implicitly negatively evaluates the bureaucratic demands made of clients to submit them. As well as challenging the bureaucratic procedure for its assumptions about what constitutes a receipt to their clients, Orla also later challenges the process of the institution needing a receipt before they release the funds: “how often do you get a receipt for something before you’ve paid for it - you need to pay for it in the first place and so where’s that money going to come from to pay for it” (lines 594-595, page 229, appendix 6c). In this way she implicitly questions the use of the word “receipt” as an adequate term for what is going on here. This exemplifies Maryns’ argument that people interact with “varying degrees of pretextual difference. What something means for one person may have different meanings for someone else, depending on their experiences, the way in which they look at things” (2006:6).

As well as identifying this process as somewhat unhelpful to clients in that the writing of a receipt is not a universally agreed literacy practice, in response to the institutional demand for receipts provided in a particular manner, caseworkers describe ways in which they mediate the literacy event, with the goal of enabling clients to better access their allocated funds. In her analysis of the bureaucratisation of livestock auctions, Jones identifies three strategies people use when talking around text: *articulation*, *negotiation* and *inscription* (2005:71) to mediate textual bureaucracy, terms which are

helpful here in understanding what is going on. In the excerpts below, we can see how caseworkers are positioned by the institutions as gatekeepers, but how they re-position themselves as literacy mediators (Jones 2005:88) (which can be regarded as contributing to the ‘advocate’ repertoire, see chapter 5), where they assist clients to access the system by *articulating* to clients what is institutionally required on the form, *negotiating* the amounts and details, and *inscribing* the verbal agreements into text. As Jones argues, literacy events are being inscribed into the bureaucratic system by officials “writing orally negotiated facts into text” (2005:86). In this way we are examining the interrelationship between talk and text here, between receipts and the talk around receipts. In the excerpt below, Maria is discussing how a vulnerable client (a victim of trafficking) struggled to access her reintegration funds because she did not have the money up-front to pay for the items to get the receipts (to then get them reimbursed). In this excerpt Maria is producing a narrative about a client who she perceived did not understand the reintegration process (and who expected to receive cash). We can see how Maria is *negotiating* (Jones, 2005:83) the details of the proposed receipt, and requests the client to *inscribe* or *entextualise* the receipt:

Excerpt 7: “...and she said we don’t do it like that we do it verbally...”

Maria (Refugee Action), appendix 6c:

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | M | ...and in the end I just said to her ‘your your husband paid the school fees go to the |
| 2. | | village school and get the receipt’ and she said ‘we don’t do it like that we do it verbally’ |
| 3. | | and I said ‘try try to just to write something’ |

In this excerpt, Maria (like Orla above) orients to the ethnocentric design of the AVR process, implicitly negatively evaluating the top-down manner of allocating funding to clients, a process which she later describes as “so far removed from their real life” (line 628, page 189, appendix 6c). Having provided a narrative explaining how difficult it was for this client to access her funds, the text in line 1 of the above excerpt, “in the end I just said to her...”, implies a last resort attempt to access the funds for the client. Maria’s use of the client’s represented speech in lines 2-3 foregrounds the cultural difference over

what is meant by ‘receipt’, again representing ‘receipts’ as not a stable category, meaning different things to different participants. In Maria’s narrative, the process of giving a receipt is carried out in the oral modality. In this excerpt Maria *negotiates* the facts of what should be included in the receipt – the school fees – and requests that the client *inscribes* the receipt herself, presumably to later get signed by a school representative. In this sense the receipt is also an entextualisation of a verbal proof of payment, where entextualisation refers to “the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit – a text – that can be lifted out of its interactional setting” (Bauman and Briggs 1990:73), and brings the ‘receipt’ into being through a literacy event. This can be seen as a disembedding of the local experience to fit the bureaucratic process. Maria represents herself then as a mediator of this literacy practice, enabling the client to access funds which she may otherwise not receive, or struggle to receive.

Lena provides a further example of a caseworker mediating the literacy event of giving and receiving a receipt. In this excerpt I had asked Lena if she had “ever ... had to...reject an idea that someone’s had for reintegration” (lines 552-553, page 163, appendix 6c); Lena contemplates previous clients for whom this might have been the case:

Excerpt 8: “...I wrote out what she would need to write...”

Lena (Refugee Action), appendix 6c:

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | L | yeah um I think that – it was difficult cos I was talking with her on the phone |
| 2. | K | mm |
| 3. | L | and um it was hard cos I kept on rejecting all of the receipts so I wasn’t rejecting her |
| 4. | | business idea but I was rejecting a lot of the receipts because (laughs) they didn’t have |
| 5. | | the right information on them |
| 6. | K | oh right |
| 7. | L | and if they don’t have the right information on them I can’t I just can’t [K (())] do |
| 8. | | do anything with that so what I did I tried to set out really clearly in em- in an email what |
| 9. | | it needs to have on it? and then I also set out – um cos she need I set out I wrote out |
| 10. | | what she would need to write I um: and then her name um |
| 11. | K | like a template yeah |
| 12. | L | p- yeah a template paid this amount |
| 13. | K | ah OK |
| 14. | L | however money for this item and she had to fill in the type of item it was |
| 15. | K | OK |
| 16. | L | and then signature and date so I made this template |

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 17. | K | mm |
| 18. | L | and she was really good she then made sort of five f- f- wrote this out five times |
| 19. | K | oh OK |
| 20. | L | for different receipts and so that was sort of a way of trying to get around [K: oh OK |
| 21. | | (()) the problem with receipts |
| 22. | K | effective |
| 23. | L | yeah |
| 24. | K | and then she could then access the the system |

In this excerpt Lena orients to her duty of rejecting receipts which “didn’t have the right information on them” (lines 4-5), in which she is institutionally positioned to reject receipts from clients which do not meet the official basic requirements. This is echoed by George: “the auditors will then come back after you...if the invoices are not - within certain standards” (lines 137-138, page 99, appendix 6c). Lena distinguishes rejecting receipts from rejecting “the business idea” (lines 3-4), however she implicitly acknowledges that the end result is pragmatically the same for the client – the client cannot receive the AVR funds to start the business, revealing the bureaucratic power that caseworkers have. Lena represents herself as actively mediating this literacy practice by first *articulating* what needs to be included: “I tried to set out really clearly in... an email what it needs to have on it” (lines 8-9). She then in lines 9-10 implicitly *negotiates* the personalised content (amounts/dates/payee etc.) needed to be included, and finally *inscribes* the details of what the client needs to include in an email. In lines 9-10 it appears she then writes out exactly what the client needs to include on the receipt, including the client’s name, signature and date (line 16), effectively designing a template for the client to copy or print out and complete. Lena’s goal here was to “get around the problem with receipts” (line 20) and enable the client to access her funds. In this excerpt the client is represented as not being knowledgeable about institutional paperwork and requirements, and as therefore having pretextual gaps (Maryns and Blommaert 2002). As such Lena represents the client as having different cultural expectations about writing a receipt as a literacy practice, and by creating an ad-hoc system to address this problem, Lena categorises this problem as an environmental one (and one the institution should address), rather than the client’s incompetence. In this excerpt we can see how Lena represents a situation where the client’s ‘receipt’ has different orders of indexicality, which Blommaert define as “systematically reproduced, stratified meanings often called ‘norms’ or ‘rules’ of

language” (2005:73). As Blommaert goes on to argue, written documents which move geographically around the globe can move to a place with “very different values attached to linguistic signs and messages” (2005:79). In the context of an office in the UK, the client’s receipt fails to function in this environment as it might in the country of origin, something which is acknowledged by caseworkers here. Like Jacquemet (2011), who noted that Western assumptions were mapped onto asylum seekers’ narratives, caseworkers question ethnocentric conceptions about how receipts (and tenancy agreements, see Richard lines 492-507, appendix 6c) are mapped onto texts/receipts from other countries.

Just as Jones found in her research on literacy practices at a cattle auction, when farmers had to comply with governmental positioning in order to sell cattle (2005:87), clients have to comply with the bureaucratic discursive positioning (and submit the correct receipt or tenancy agreement) because without it they do not access their reintegration assistance. Some caseworkers represent themselves as aware that the bureaucratic environment can unfairly disadvantage clients, choosing to assist clients in bridging the gap between the demands of the institution, and clients’ literacy practices and linguistic repertoires, by acting as ‘literacy mediators’, though this is not seemingly part of their official role.

In this section we have seen how caseworkers at Refugee Action challenge and negotiate the receipts process in the AVR programme by questioning the universality of a receipt as a literacy practice, and by reflecting upon ad-hoc unofficial methods caseworkers use to get around this fixed understanding of receipts. The analysis demonstrates how literacy events, as Barton *et al.* argue, “represent the instantiation of an unstable, contested ideological world within everyday verbal exchange” (2005:208). Caseworkers display an awareness that these terms (receipt/tenancy agreement) are fluid and contested. The excerpts above show how some caseworkers view the process as perhaps not accommodating clients’ superdiversity, and that clients cannot be expected to have knowledge or resources to produce receipts in this narrow interpretation. Rather than representing the problem as clients lacking institutional knowledge/literacy about AVR or UK culture, some caseworkers represent the problem as inherently institutional, by representing the system as perhaps unfairly demanding that clients have a familiarity

with what is an institutionally acceptable receipt (due to their institutional literacy). They cast themselves as mediators in the literacy practice (employing an ‘advocate’ repertoire, ch.5), for example writing a pro-forma for a receipt to enable clients to access the funds. There’s a sense that this lack of top-down institutional understanding of clients’ linguistic resources and literacy practices makes them all the more vulnerable upon return when accessing reintegration assistance. However, it appears that whether clients are successful in submitting receipts and accessing their reintegration assistance may rest, to a small degree, on how much caseworkers are willing to act as literacy mediators: it is not their official role, though some represent themselves as taking on this additional responsibility.

Caseworkers’ mediating of texts around literacy events and their selection of translation services and modalities with the goal of communicating AVR information appears to exemplify Baynham who, in his study on community interpreters, concludes that “literacy events in multilingual settings typically have an oral dimension that involves shifting or switching between the languages available to speakers... to avoid misunderstanding when one or more participant has limited access not only to written language but also to the oral forms of the dominant language” (Baynham, 1997:312). However, while Baynham suggests mode-switching is typical of multilingual literacy events, the data here suggests that although some caseworkers represent themselves as mode-switching for multilingual purposes (as discussed above), they do not do so as a rule, with approaches varying from caseworker to caseworker.

Having explored how caseworkers negotiate institutional approaches to multilingualism, the following section draws together some concluding remarks.

6.5 Chapter summary

As Codó and Pérez-Milans argue, institutions have to “manage the multiple tensions stemming from the particular historical juncture in which they find themselves” (2014:385). IOM and Refugee Action broadly orient to the superdiversity of clients with the provision of translation and interpreting. However, this chapter has shown how using limited AVR resources, individual *caseworkers* represent themselves as managing the

'tension' of providing crucial AVR information to a superdiverse client-base (with possible huge trust issues), while being positioned by the wider AVR project and funders as responsible for ensuring clients have made an 'informed decision'. Although acknowledging that some caseworkers display presuppositions regarding clients and languages, I have shown how caseworkers do also orient to clients' superdiversity, with some caseworkers representing themselves as negotiating both the clients' presumed linguistic repertoires, and assumptions within top-down institutional multilingualism. I have examined how caseworkers display criticality and creativity (or resourcefulness) via representing themselves as translanguaging. They do this via their positioning regarding superdiversity, representing themselves as making individual choices about languages and modalities, and drawing in linguistic resources they find useful in order to "achieve their interactional goals and agendas" (Angouri 2014:3), within the confines of top-down institutional multilingualism. Codó reminds us, however, in her review of data collection techniques, that although self-report data "can yield interesting insights" we should be mindful:

"of the multiple conditionings shaping speakers' expressed opinions and of their contextually situated nature. The analysis of speakers' real verbal productions may show them to be rather different from what actors reported them to be" (2008b:159)

As Moyer argues regarding her institutional setting, forms of multilingualism "are guided by institutional ideologies and conceptions about language and migrants, the general nature of communication and meaning making processes; and decisions about what information should get communicated, and [in] what medium or modality" (2011:1210). We have seen how caseworkers position themselves in relation to multilingualism in research interviews, and in doing so it is evident how institutional conceptions and ideologies about language and communication combine to construct an institutional approach to multilingualism. At times the top-down approach is challenged by caseworkers with the aim of better serving the individual needs of their clients; other times caseworkers align with institutional policies/recommended practice.

Codó (2013) in her research on institutional encounters argues that institutional representatives exert bureaucratic and linguistic regulation over immigration advice-

seekers. This can also be said of IOM and Refugee Action institutional approaches (at both organisational and caseworker levels) to multilingualism: assumptions and practices regarding language have the potential to shape how clients experience and access AVR services. Both institutions, as outlined in section 6.2.1 do provide translations (and interpreting) to varying degrees, and to this extent they orient to the superdiversity of their clients, sometimes in very innovative ways (see section 6.2), which is at times positively evaluated by Refugee Action staff. Refugee Action appear to build in awareness of linguistic diversity into their official advice-giving process, for example through the caseworker declaration (appendix 3d) which staff represent as their *duty* to adhere to, and in the highlighting of difficult specialist terminology which clients are encouraged to ask caseworkers about (and therefore clients in a small way contribute to Refugee Action's policy/multilingualism by encouraging dialogue). IOM, however, appears to rely more on the professionalism and expertise of individual staff members to appropriately address communicative issues in the application process. However, caseworkers from both institutions nevertheless also problematise institutional provisions made for linguistic diversity and negotiate a space between institutional ideologies inherent in programme procedures and communication materials, and their own conceptions about clients, communication and literacy practices. As such, caseworkers reflect on their own practice and represent themselves as employing and mixing modalities as they see fit, to adapt the top-down imposed multilingual 'environment' for clients, just as Angermeyer finds in his study of courtroom interpreting, where court staff exhibit "a range of multilingual practices that do not always conform to institutional (state) norms" (2014:385).

Caseworkers' criticality and creativity (Li 2013) manifests in their dynamic and flexible use of written and spoken modalities as they perform translanguaging and mode-switching for multilingual purposes, with the creation of new multilingual practices over and above those designated by the institution. For example, in challenging the way receipts are dealt with institutionally, caseworkers acknowledge that a literacy event is not a 'stable category' (Barton *et al.*, 2005:35), and clearly demonstrate how a top-down approach to the programme may cause and maintain asymmetries of power in the return process with clients unable to access crucial funds. As Maryns and Blommaert argue, this acknowledgement of "diversity and the presence of pretextual gaps in human interaction serves as a precondition for acknowledging the power embedded in discursive

relationships, its ensuing social inequality and the consequences this may have for the quality of any individual's life in society" (2002:15). Similarly, caseworkers problematise the institutional construct of the 'ideal' client being literate in English or language/s spoken in the country of return, and contest the comprehensibility of AVR terminology; as a result they mix the modalities in order to negotiate the textual environment for their clients.

The analytic concepts of translanguaging and mode-switching have been useful in the analysis of interview discourse, allowing an understanding of how clients represent mixing modalities and languages in order to meet interactional goals, going between systems in order to communicate to clients in this multilingual environment. The type of translanguaging/mode-switching represented in this AVR context appears to be less immediate than translanguaging described within the classroom, with caseworkers having time to deliberate over the modality and language used. Although removed from the original classroom concept of translanguaging, caseworkers still nevertheless describe strategic employment and meaning making through multiple semiotic resources, and represent doing so in order to increase clients' epistemic access, something also found in analyses of translanguaging in the classroom setting (Makalela 2015). By differentiating translanguaging and mode-switching for multilingual purposes I have been able to demonstrate how caseworkers' represent switching modalities due to clients' presumed linguistic repertoires and competencies in the languages available in a particular modality, therefore examining the juncture of literacies and languages in this institutional setting.

Furthermore, I have noted how caseworkers also represent themselves as mode-switching for other purposes, seemingly unrelated to the multilingual context. In this way we can consider how the effects of mode-switching and translanguaging are multiple: by strategically switching to the written modality, further to ensuring the client has access to the information in a language they understand, caseworkers may (attempt to) engender trust, while also ensuring clients have text in a format they can refer back to, while reducing their own work-load by using AVR text authored by the institution. As Codó finds in her study of institutional multilingualism, the motivation behind institutional representatives' simplifying technical terms is not to improve clients' comprehension of officials' turns, but rather to reduce the chances of officials having to engage in "long-winded processes of meaning clarification" (2008a:88) in a busy office with a long queue

of clients to attend to. This reminds us that a commitment to improving epistemic access should not be presumed a priority for institutional representatives (although it does appear to be for caseworkers in this AVR setting). It should also be noted, as Maryns (2006) Jacquemet (2011) acknowledge (perhaps more so than Codó (2008b)), communicative problems are a result of the bureaucratic system and the unrealistic demands made by the institution/Home Office of staff and clients, rather than the staff themselves. Although clients' access to linguistic resources will inevitably be limited (or 'truncated' in Blommaert's (2005) terms) in these intercultural high-stakes gate-keeping encounters, it is the inherent asymmetry of power enacted through institutional constraints, and bureaucratic reluctance to address superdiversity, which may result in reduced opportunities to access AVR information.

Ethnographic observations regarding the hierarchizing of languages indicates that the broader concept of translanguaging could be further employed in analysing client-caseworker spoken interactions, exploring how and why clients and caseworkers move between different systems and structures in order to communicate in this environment, and the effect that this has in accessing information about AVR.

Barton argues that the blame for literacy problems "might be attributed to fate, the individual, the school, the family, or the social structure" (Barton, 2007:12). The manner in which caseworkers orient to clients' linguistic requirements and negotiate official/top-down institutional multilingualism, represents the 'problem' of potential miscommunication in this superdiverse setting not as a problem inherent with the client due to being "illiterate" or having "low literacy" but as, on the whole, a problem caused by their *environments* (both in the UK and countries of origin) and institutional context. Some caseworkers interviewed from both IOM and Refugee Action orienting towards a more 'social model' of multilingualism, similar to the social model of disability which proposes that "disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference" (Scope, 2015).

Here clients are represented as being disadvantaged by an inadequate institutional response to their linguistic needs. This echoes Blommaert *et al.*'s conception of multilingualism not as "what individuals have or lack, but what the environment, as structured determination and interactional emergence, enables and disables them to deploy" (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck 2005:213).

Barton notes that written information “extends the function of language and enables you to do different things” (2007:43). A devaluing of written information, whether ostensibly due to time constraints in a busy work environment, queries about the usefulness of the format itself or assumptions about clients’ literacy or trust practices, may potentially result in restricting AVR clients’ capacity to prepare for return. This can be in terms of offering information that can be used for reference or as a ‘contract’, to expand on complex information, to assist with memory, or to share with others. Yet at the same time, caseworkers’ reliance on written information may also restrict clients in accessing institutional services. As Moyer finds in her research setting, patients are unable to challenge, clarify or request more information when they are given “written documents or leaflets with instructions they must understand and follow” (2011:1216). Similarly, some AVR clients when provided with written documents and encouraged to respond in writing, may be restricted in terms of not being able to clarify doubts, challenge elements of the service, speak in their preferred language, ask things they are not comfortable writing down or cannot write down. In AVR communication, clients’ agency (their capacity to act in terms of preparing for return) is shaped via institutional responses to superdiversity through the environment of multilingualism and as such their access to semiotic sources is blocked by institutional decisions about languages and modalities. However, caseworkers’ adapting of institutional procedures in the AVR setting orients to – and challenges – this top-down control to some degree. It would seem that in order to avoid any potential misunderstanding with superdiverse clients regarding the AVR process, all information is best supplied both in writing and verbally, regardless of the country of origin of the client. To return to the type of information provided: accessing information on the situation of the country itself, the legal ramifications of applying for AVR, the process of accessing the financial assistance in the country of origin, advice about how to set up a business, how to access housing and medical support can all be affected by institutional assumptions and conceptions regarding clients’ linguistic repertoires.

In conclusion, caseworkers’ reported strategic mixing of modalities and languages in this setting appears to be crucial to their ability to communicate AVR information to AVR applicants. Boccagni (2015) argues that dealing with the challenges of superdiversity requires both a top-down approach and an individual staff-level approach:

“While dealing with super-diversity calls for a flexible, open-ended and personalized approach to immigrant clients, it also requires organizational and professional resources – in terms of training, supervision and workload allocation – that should not go unnoticed” (2015:618).

This can be seen in the analysis above: while caseworkers’ mode-switching and translanguaging work appears important in their day to day work, top-down institutional approaches (e.g. the provision of resources such as standard translations, receipt templates, access to interpreters) are also critical if aiming to increase epistemic access, and therefore augment clients’ opportunities to prepare for return. It should be acknowledged that although caseworkers will at times be confident that clients have epistemic access, it can be difficult for caseworkers to ascertain clients’ linguistic competencies in different languages in this busy office environment – an individual’s competencies are of course not uniform (Blommaert and Backus 2013). The institutions could support staff by adding into the administrative/communicative process certain procedures which would contribute to the likelihood that superdiverse clients with differing linguistic repertoires and institutional literacies have equal access to AVR information. This could perhaps be achieved by sharing some of above caseworker approaches in order to enable all clients to access AVR information and funds in a timely fashion, regardless of the caseworker they are assigned. This will be returned to in chapter 7.

The following chapter re-visits the findings from the three analytic chapters, drawing conclusions.

7. Discussion, critical assessment and conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter revisits the study's research questions, as introduced in 1.7, critically assessing the aims and achievements of the study, and presenting the implications of the research. I also address limitations and propose areas for future research. The impetus behind my study was to address the central question:

‘What can a study of discourse contribute to our understanding of Assisted Voluntary Return?’

As a result of my time working at IOM between 2007 and 2009 as an Operations Assistant, the observations I have since made in fieldwork, and my interviews with caseworkers about their work practices, three key research questions emerged, that I subsequently focused on through this study. My goal was to conduct a systematic examination of discursive practice with the possibility of subsequently contributing to practical applications of the AVR project. The remainder of this chapter is divided as follows:

- 7.2 Response to research question 1: ‘How do IOM and Refugee Action discursively account for AVR in their institutional written materials?’
- 7.3 Response to research question 2: ‘How do caseworkers discursively position themselves with regard to institutional ideologies and caseworker identities in research interviews?’
- 7.4 Response to research question 3: ‘How do caseworkers discursively position themselves with regard to clients' linguistic resources and institutional multilingualism in interview data?’
- 7.5 Concluding remarks, with proposals for new research emerging from this study

In designing these research questions, two broad facets of AVR became apparent as being central to my understanding of the AVR project. These were *voluntariness* and, as an aspect of this, *being informed/informedness*. These two issues became the organising principles around which the three research questions were examined. In addressing the study in this way, the research sheds light both on the usefulness of discourse analysis as

an explanatory tool for examining AVR as a social practice and, importantly, on the institutional environment in which clients access AVR programmes and information.

7.2 RQ1: How do IOM and Refugee Action discursively account for AVR in their institutional written materials?

This research question, addressed through the first analytic chapter (chapter 4), sought to reveal how IOM and Refugee Action oriented to a ‘controversial’ aspect (specifically the voluntariness) of AVR through their written information materials. Both institutions face a challenge in demonstrating their independence and impartiality, while acknowledging they are funded in part by the Home Office, with its perceived ‘burden-relieving’ agenda. Through an analysis of rhetorical-discursive devices (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a) and Social Actor representation (van Leeuwen 1996), I have evidenced how the institutions textually account for (or defend) their programmes, and how, in doing so, they reinforce distinct institutional ideologies within AVR.

Although, as discussed in section 4.3, return via AVR can best be considered “mandatory” (ECRE 2013) for many applicants, I have shown how both IOM and Refugee Action explicitly and implicitly represent their AVR programmes, in their respective standard AVR leaflets, as independent from the Home Office, therefore formulating AVR as voluntary (section 4.4.1). This is achieved through association and disassociation (van Leeuwen 1996), with rhetorical devices employed in IOM and Refugee Action’s information leaflets which distance the organisations from the Home Office (with its coercive and ‘burden-relieving’ agenda), and associate them with the best interests of the clients. IOM, for example, uses a contrast device in describing AVR as ‘dignified and orderly’ to *disassociate* AVR from the implicitly undignified alternative of the Home Office’s forced removal programme. In foregrounding the 55,000 asylum seekers they have advised and their 30 years’ experience, the rhetorical use of figures (Mautner 2008) in Refugee Action’s leaflet *associates* the organisation with its own clients, implying affiliation and a shared agenda. The leaflets further distance IOM and Refugee Action from the Home Office by explicitly stating they are not part of the government, and via the representational device of *exclusion*, in which the Home Office is also *suppressed* (van

Leeuwen 1996) in terms of its role in funding the programmes and approving AVR applications. *Passive* and *active role allocation* of clients and the organisations in the leaflets also formulates clients as having a choice, and of return via AVR as voluntary. Clients are represented as active in relation to requesting information about the programmes, signing up and deciding to return, for example, “When he decided to return to Uganda...” (excerpt 7, ch.4). When the *organisations* are represented as active it is in a supportive way: “If you decide to return, we will: help you plan your return...” (excerpt 8, ch.4), and relies on the clients’ action and decision to participate.

Through these rhetorical devices, both organisations account for the programmes in the standard AVR leaflets by representing themselves as independent and non-coercive, creating the implicature that clients have agency (Ahearn 2001), i.e. the opportunity to opt into and out of AVR, should they want to. The leaflets represent the organisations as being impartial and as not being motivated by ‘burden-relieving’ goals. However, in doing so, the texts formulate clients as perhaps having more power than the current political context always allows, and constructs the gatekeeping situation as one in which the opportunity to return ‘home’ is being guarded, rather than the opportunity to remain in the UK, which is perhaps more accurate for some people.

However, in sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2, I also show how, through the entextualisation of clients’ return experiences in the institutions’ *Stories of Return* texts, the institutions afford different means to the label ‘voluntary’. It has been instructive to note how the two organisations differ in the use of these narratives as a communicative vehicle. Analysis of the *Stories of Return* texts reveals the institutions adopting different entextualisation practices, imposing different organisation and focus to this “event-as-text” (Eisenhart 2008:61). These discursive representations are ideologically-laden and can be seen to perhaps reflect the institutions’ distinct motivations in administering AVR programmes.

In accounting for return, IOM and Refugee Action foreground different aspects of the return process, explicitly acknowledged in their framing of the narratives, but also evident through an examination of the ‘complicating actions’ (Labov and Waletzky 1967) of the narratives. IOM, as may be anticipated based on its approach to other migration projects (discussed in section 4.4.1), addresses AVR in the *Stories of Return* publication as

a technical problem to be overcome with its reintegration expertise and world-wide reach. IOM accounts for AVR (and justifies its involvement) by foregrounding its ability to support clients to gain a sustainable income, by formulating IOM as an expert via positive self-presentation, and by constructing AVR as having a positive effect on the local economy in the country of origin (e.g. excerpt 17, ch.4). IOM's *expertise and support* is foregrounded via rhetorical devices (such as constructed dialogue, e.g. in excerpt 16, ch.4) in IOM's narratives, accounting for IOM's ability to administer AVR. These documents function then as a vehicle to promote IOM's expertise in managed migration, both to clients and fellow agencies, and detail IOM's success in administering the reintegration fund to its funders. Refugee Action, however, accounts for AVR largely by justifying the individual's *decision* to return (as the texts explicitly state). Instead of accounting for the institution's ability to do the work, the narratives in the main justify the individual's decision to return by weighing up the context of life in the UK and the pull-factors of 'home' (e.g. again through constructed dialogue in excerpt 21, ch.4). Thus in accounting for AVR, the two institutions orient differently to the controversial aspects: Refugee Action needs to account for the individual's *decision/application to return*, because it provides context that contests the voluntariness. Through these narratives Refugee Action shows that although AVR is not always voluntary, it can be a positive move for some people given the limited choices they have. In contrast, because the IOM *Stories of Return* do not problematise the notion of voluntariness through these specific narratives, there is no imperative to account for this controversial aspect.

In foregrounding the decision to return as a key aspect in the return narrative, Refugee Action's online *Stories of Return* contextualise AVR, problematising the simplified interpretation of 'voluntary' (evident in AVR leaflets, discussed above). This is achieved via 'event work' (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a) – that is, in describing the 'event' of return. In their different use of the narratives, the institutions choose different places to begin the story of return. IOM largely begins the story at the date when the client arrives back in the country of origin (e.g. "After his return to Kampala...", excerpt 18, ch.4). Refugee Action, however, begins the story much earlier in the UK – or even before arriving – and therefore include the push-factors of return. For example, "Enam sought asylum in the UK

but his application was refused...” (excerpt 23, ch.4), illustrating the restricted context in which people ‘choose’ to apply to return.

In doing so, Refugee Action (to a degree) politicises the programmes by challenging the institutional-client power relationship implicit in the label ‘voluntary’. Refugee Action’s formulation of ‘voluntary’ acknowledges that ‘voluntary’ is not a question of its clients’ agency in terms of truly being able to choose to stay, but rather, as Andrijasevic and Walters (2010:22) note, of its own modality in its ability to enforce the return. Refugee Action’s politicisation is further evident in its occasional, muted and implicit disapproval of the wider UK asylum process in its *Stories of Return* (e.g. excerpt 24, ch.4). This perhaps reflects Refugee Action’s continued parallel role as a campaigning organisation, challenging injustice in the asylum process.

In contrast to Refugee Action’s problematising of the ‘voluntary’ label, IOM’s texts create a series of implicatures that clients are not subject to pressures in the UK (such as destitution, detention, lack of work) and are therefore returning voluntarily, by omitting the push-factors in this selected *Stories of Return* publication. By positioning clients as *voluntarily* returning ‘home’, critical analysis of the social and political context of return is avoided. As Geiger and Pécoud argue, depoliticising AVR “evacuates questions of power, principles, interests or conflicts” (2012:11).

IOM’s deselecting of the context of life in the UK and the decision to return via ‘event work’ (Arribas-Ayllon *et al.* 2011a), and foregrounding the topic of business start-up, suppresses the issue of some clients being structurally disadvantaged. The narratives then become more about the economics of migration, rather than the humanitarian aspects, although inherently linked. It represents AVR as a rights-based initiative, rather than as a migration control or management tool.

The *Stories of Return* texts appear to have multiple audiences (clients, agencies, even funders) and functions. The entextualisation of return via these narratives inevitably involves the deletion/rearrangement/substitution (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999) of certain aspects of clients’ return experiences, which will to some degree affect the narratives’ function as preparatory tools for clients’ preparing for return, and therefore the texts’ ability to contribute to clients’ informedness. While IOM’s documents, in part,

appear better suited to account for AVR to funders/agencies (discussed in section 4.2.3), they are in practice used by IOM caseworkers to prepare clients for return, as well as in outreach with fellow agencies. In contrast, Refugee Action addresses the narratives directly to clients (e.g. in the introduction to the narratives “Get advice from people who have already returned...” discussed in section 4.2.4). However, research interview data indicates that, in practice, the narratives are largely used by Refugee Action caseworkers to illustrate to *agencies* what the programmes offer and achieve. While it is perhaps to be expected that publications may have multiple audiences and uses, the mismatch between the intended audiences of the IOM narratives and their ‘overhearing’ audience may contribute to problems regarding trust and expectations. IOM’s narratives provide a very narrow view of return and the issues which clients may face, foregrounding reintegration-based topics regarding setting up a business, while perhaps purporting to represent what life upon return will be like, even though other issues are backgrounded. It constructs an experience of return in which the pressures of life in the UK are not important to the narrative. This potentially risks engendering a lack of trust due to the difference between how return is represented, and how it is possibly experienced by clients.

My analysis in chapter 4 has been able to illustrate the detail of the representation of voluntariness, and how this varies across texts and between the two organisations. Strand, Bendixsen, Paasche, Schultz’s (2011:72) findings proposed that the promotion of return as ‘voluntary’ was regarded as a contributor to a lack of trust in the programmes, while caseworkers also voice concerns in my research interviews about the difficulty between these representations of voluntariness and credibility (e.g. Janice, lines 625-626, appendix 6c). It is possible that, in a context of governmental coercion for some clients, in discursively constructing AVR as voluntary, AVR literature may for some appear to be lacking integrity. I suggest this may perpetuate institutional trust problems, with the potential to deter people who may value the support AVR provides from accessing AVR materials, again affecting clients’ opportunities for informedness prior to return. I propose the gap between AVR discourse and the apparent context of some people’s application may potentially present AVR institutional literature as persuasive, undermining the work IOM, Refugee Action and their caseworkers do to increase clients’ informedness via their impartial advice.

The following section draws conclusions regarding caseworkers' positioning relative to the institutions' perceived ideological agendas, in particular regarding the voluntariness of AVR, providing a complementary interview-based critique to that provided by the textual analyses from chapter 4, as discussed above. I address how caseworkers orient to the ideologically different motivations underpinning AVR, challenging representations of power inherent in these AVR institutional texts, and negotiating a space in which to offer impartial advice for people returning.

7.3 RQ2: How do the caseworkers at IOM and Refugee Action discursively position themselves with regard to institutional ideologies and construct professional identities in the research interview data?

Chapter 5 addressed in three ways how caseworkers position themselves relative to institutional ideologies in the research interviews: by examining how caseworkers orient to the voluntariness of the programmes; by analysing how caseworkers distance themselves from, or align themselves with, perceived institutional agendas; and by identifying *interpretative repertoires* (Wetherell and Potter 1988) employed in the construction of caseworkers' professional identities.

Through the analysis in chapter 5, I have shown how caseworkers raise and – using an array of rhetorical discursive devices – position themselves with regard to the specific topic of voluntariness, largely problematising the institutional use of the label 'voluntary' for these programmes. In doing so, they challenge the institutional construction of clients as having agency (Ahearn 2001) in this scenario. Caseworkers consistently position many clients as not wanting to return (e.g. in Quinn's "some people do want to go back..." excerpt 1, ch.5), conflicting with the representation of AVR in some institutional texts (addressed in chapter 4). This evidences the difficult position in which caseworkers find themselves, when administering the programmes. Caseworkers display discursive tension regarding this conflicted aspect of their role: although acknowledging the stigma or moral "taint" (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999) in their work, the analysis demonstrates how some caseworkers use clients' constructed dialogue (Tannen 1989) to refocus (Dick 2005) onto

non-stigmatised aspects of the role in order to account for this element of the “dirty work” (Hughes 1958) of AVR, thereby protecting their social identity (e.g. Ana in excerpt 3, ch.5) and reframing their work in terms of humanitarian goals and concern with the individual’s welfare. They successfully negotiate a path through the power asymmetries within the programme, displaying a commitment to the term ‘voluntary’ in terms of the impartiality of their advice (so ‘voluntary’ in terms of their *modality* in the return). However, they challenge the use of the term when applied to people who report feeling coerced to return.

Based on Bamberg’s (1997) 3-level positioning framework, I show how, in my research interviews, caseworkers position a sense of professional identity relative to perceptions of wider institutional motivations for AVR. I demonstrate how nuanced and varied this positioning is, and how central this tension is to caseworkers’ professional identity. Again, employing Rhetorical Discourse Analysis (RDA), the data evidenced that caseworkers, through a range of rhetorical devices, variously display solidarity with, and distance from, clients and institutions. For example, Maria explicitly questions and negatively evaluates (via contrast and othering), the Home Office’s perceived motivations for outreach work (to “recruit numbers”, excerpt 4, ch. 4), while aligning herself with more humanitarian goals (“raise awareness and build trust”) for outreach. This exemplifies how caseworkers were able to discursively resist the Home Office agenda for AVR taking precedence in practice, with caseworkers reframing AVR practice to ideologically fit with their professional goals.

Further positioning regarding professional identities manifests in the use of *advocate* and *gatekeeper* interpretative repertoires (Wetherall and Potter 1988), reflecting the dual responsibilities “commonly played simultaneously by ... social welfare professionals” (Trinch 2001:477). In doing so, caseworkers discursively align themselves with clients or the institutions, or sometimes both. The advocate repertoire is characterised by the metaphorical vocabulary of *fighting*, *pushing for*, *battling* (see section 5.4.2) used to represent the caseworker’s relationship with the Home Office. The advocate repertoire can function to rebuff damage to caseworkers’ social identity caused by the ‘dirty work’ nature of the professional role, and the ambiguity over the motivations behind the programmes. It forcefully constructs caseworkers as motivated to assist clients

who are structurally disadvantaged by the AVR process, and to work in the clients' best interests, in this difficult situation. Importantly, in aligning with the client, the advocate repertoire distances caseworkers from the perceived Home Office agenda of 'burden-relieving' and assigns the gatekeeping role to the Home Office or to the IOM/Refugee Action management team. It positions the caseworkers as constrained by institutional policies and hierarchy, and represents them as aligning with clients and constructing humanitarian identities (Dick 2005).

In contrast, the gatekeeping repertoire, is characterised by a perception of aspects of AVR as either categorically one thing or another: for example, as being ready or not ready to return (e.g. excerpt 8, ch.5); in categorising clients (and their motives for applying to AVR) as either genuine or not genuine (e.g. excerpt 7, ch.5); and in clients either being safe or not safe upon return (e.g. excerpt 9, ch.5). The *gatekeeper* repertoire functions to protect not only the institutions' resources, but to protect the classification of return as being voluntary (in terms of the institutions' modality in the return process). The gatekeeper repertoire is key in its function to protect the institutions (and the caseworker) from applications from clients who state they will be endangered upon return. When used in reference to so-called 'Section 4' applications (AVR applications perceived to be made specifically to become eligible for 'Section 4' welfare in the UK), the gatekeeper repertoire positions the caseworker as aware of the 'true' nature of the application, but unable to protect the institution from it. It also potentially functions to construct a loyal and professional identity, aligning the caseworker with the interests of the institution and its ideological motivations.

The use of these repertoires displays further tensions and disparities not only within more professional aspects of individuals' social identities, but also within each institution's staff body as a whole. These repertoires function in different ways to protect/bolster caseworkers' social identities and account for AVR. As caseworkers employ them, they reinforce and challenge client and institutional power relationships.

Chapters four and five together, according to discursive evidence which shows conflicted stance, evidence how the social actors involved in AVR (caseworkers, IOM and Refugee Action) orient to power roles according to their ideological goals and positions.

The multiple agendas evident in AVR written texts, combined with caseworkers' varied positioning towards perceived institutional motivations, evidences what McGhee and Bennett (2014a) propose – that AVR is contested.

Caseworkers, however, being the individuals enacting the administrative procedures, exert bureaucratic power in how AVR is operationally carried out – e.g. in the extent to which caseworkers advocate on behalf of their clients. They exert power in whether they choose to take up clients' causes, or position themselves on the other hand, as defending institutional resources, and in whether they regard the clients' request/perceived need as an entitlement or not. The mixed representations of caseworkers' professional identities in either protecting institutional resources or advocating on behalf of clients' rights/entitlements could potentially result in confusion over client-caseworker responsibilities in the AVR process.

Lastly, the research interviews appeared to be valuable for individual participants. The research interviews allowed staff a time and space to display a reflexivity about their work to explore aspects of their role they may not normally have time to consider. Richard, for example, has not previously reflected on why he had not used *Stories of Return* with clients and considers using them in future; Maria seemingly changes her mind mid-interview about her assumption regarding what a client's signature means; Lena says she is still thinking about/processing her work practice; Quinn develops evaluations of information sources during the interview. The research interview and process itself therefore appears potentially beneficial for participants.

Having examined the issue of voluntariness and wider institutional ideologies within AVR through chapters 4 and 5, the following section focuses on issues related to *informedness*, drawing conclusions from the final analytic chapter, in response to research question 3.

7.4 RQ3: How do caseworkers discursively position themselves with regard to clients' linguistic resources and institutional multilingualism in research interview data?

In the third analytic chapter (chapter 6) I address the key issue of clients' opportunity to be *informed* about AVR. This is important in itself, although also intrinsic to classifying return as voluntary. The data shows how caseworkers orient to and mediate clients' linguistic resources and top-down multilingualism. In doing so, chapter 6 identifies discourse processes which are effective in promoting equality in this specific gatekeeping encounter (highlighting positive strategies of communication as discussed in section 3.1.2 in relation to Positive Discourse Analysis), and arguably has the most potential for practical application of the thesis.

Caseworkers' negotiation of clients' linguistic resources and top-down multilingualism can be considered a type of linguistic control (Codó 2008a) over clients; providing or restricting opportunities to access AVR information, and gatekeeping aspects of the programmes. In reviewing top-down approaches to multilingualism in section 6.2, I have highlighted the potential for restricted access to AVR information due to simplified understandings of people's literacies and language competencies, but also the inevitable realities of restricted communications and operations budgets.

However, in focusing on the intersection of multilingualism and multimodality, I demonstrate in chapter 6 how, contrary to findings from other institutional multilingual gatekeeping research (e.g. Moyer 2011; Codó and Garrido 2010), caseworkers do at times problematise assumptions inherent in the institution's top-down multilingualism.

Caseworkers display creativity and criticality (Li 2013) in their flexible use of written and spoken modalities as they represent themselves as *translanguaging* or *modeswitching*, or as literacy mediators (Jones 2005), when faced with the "challenges of novelty and newness" (Phillimore 2015:578) of superdiversity.

For example, some caseworkers challenge the assumption that clients understand AVR forms because they have signed them, problematising a simple view of literacy (e.g. excerpt 1, ch.6), or that clients are necessarily able to read AVR information even in translation (excerpt 3, ch.6). These caseworkers implicitly acknowledge that a client's linguistic repertoire is not uniform (Blommaert and Backus 2013). My analysis shows how

some caseworkers display criticality in choosing “between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour” (Li 2013:1223), when aligning with, or challenging top-down multilingualism. For example, some caseworkers formulate mixing written and spoken information as an occupational duty (see excerpt 2, ch.6), while also challenging assumptions within top-down multilingualism. Furthermore, by examining caseworkers’ positioning regarding clients’ obligation to provide receipts in order to gain access to the financial element of AVR programmes, I evidence how some caseworkers challenge institutional (and Home Office) assumptions inherent in this bureaucratic process. I show how caseworkers represent themselves as literacy mediators, negotiating and inscribing (Jones 2005) the facts of the receipt in order to assist clients to access the funds (e.g. excerpt 7, ch. 6).

In describing these work practices in my research interviews, caseworkers implicitly display an awareness of their gatekeeping ability to provide access to AVR information, and orient to aspects of communicating AVR which they represent as difficult. Via these represented practices, the caseworkers ‘open the gate’ for the clients to access AVR information and, hence, opportunities.

From her work in an institutional setting, Moyer concludes that “[c]omplementary and multilingual modalities such as non-standard language, visual materials or interpreters would be relevant for improving overall communication” (2011:1217). Indeed, in these two institutional AVR settings, multilingual modalities are routinely considered complementary and vital to contributing towards clients’ level of informedness. It might be well expected that, as De Saint-George writes regarding Wodak’s work on multilingualism in EU institutions, workplaces such as IOM and Refugee Action that have “transnationalism, migration and mobility at their heart” (2013:3), will act as trailblazers in multilingual practices. And although Refugee Action shows itself to be innovative in its top-down institutional approach to making AVR information accessible to its superdiverse clients (see section 6.2), possibilities do seem to exist for both institutions to benefit further from mixed modalities and mediums.

By addressing the superdiversity of AVR clients, IOM and Refugee Action can offer a service which accommodates linguistic resources that “are differently distributed and functionally allocated within the repertoire” of the client (Blommaert and Backus 2013:23). Although translanguaging and mode-switching by individuals appears to be a

key method of providing AVR information and maximising opportunities for clients to access AVR information in this context, it seems to be sporadic and dependent on the individual caseworker. In order to avoid some clients' repertoires being 'truncated' (Blommaert 2005:76) by not being able to use their linguistic resources in this inevitably financially-limited institutional setting, I propose that caseworkers' awareness of superdiversity and the potential of translanguaging (e.g. in relation to using the written modality to reinforce the spoken, and vice-versa) could be shared across the institution. At present, some caseworkers who display this awareness represent their approach as individual (e.g. excerpt 3, ch. 6), rather than something addressed by all staff.

Blommaert argues that "[i]nstitutional regimes that emphasise uniformity in communication practices will exclude, marginalise and silence people whose repertoires do not match the normative expectations (2008:4)." Chapter 5 discusses the potential for linguistic inequality in these AVR gatekeeping encounters. In addressing problems inherent in gatekeeping encounters, Gumperz (1982) has called for increasing meta-communicative awareness of all speakers in such gatekeeping encounters (particularly the institutional gatekeepers), inspiring training-based studies such as Baptiste and Seig's work (2007). Jacquemet, however, suggests this may be "sociolinguistic optimism" (2011:477), as it fails to acknowledge the power dimensions at work in the interaction, particularly relevant in high-stakes gatekeeping encounters (and those in the asylum process) where the relationship is asymmetrical from the outset. He argues that officials often employ explicit, intentional communicative strategies (or 'power technologies') to guard the institutions or restrict access to its resources, suggesting that meta-communicative awareness-raising would do little to solve these communicative difficulties. Codó (2008a) appears to take a similar view of the officials' behaviour in her setting, concluding that they intentionally use these strategies to provide as little information as possible. Conversely, I suggest that training for AVR caseworkers may be well-received/beneficial as there appears to be an awareness of differential access to linguistic and contextual resources (within a context of finite institutional funds) at both organisational and caseworker levels. Phillimore argues, in regard to healthcare staff assisting clients, staff had the same targets but were not given time or training to address issues related to new migrants (2015:578). As raised earlier, caseworkers in my research interviews and during ethnographic observation regularly comment on the non-stop

nature of the work. At the very least, perhaps more funds could be allocated within the AVR project for caseworkers and managers to set aside time to consider the implications of working with superdiverse clients, particularly given caseworkers' responsibility to ensure clients' informedness before committing to such a life-changing move.

Much like the institutional top-down mode-switching employed in the communication of the 'Declaration of Voluntary Return' (6.3.1), other AVR texts could also be dealt with in this way. As proposed by some caseworkers (e.g. discussion after excerpt five, chapter 6), possible 'multilingual modalities' would improve communication about the return programmes, such as AVR information in audio visual formats and complementary verbal/written information in clients' preferred languages. In this way, clients who cannot read AVR texts may benefit from these texts in audio format (such as on CD/MP3). These audio texts would have the functions of the written modality in terms of longevity/permanence and mobility/reference, allowing the client to take the information away to listen and refer back to at their leisure, with family/friends. The audio texts would also benefit from the oral modality in terms of being in a language and/or modality they may understand. Providing texts in audio format (in any language) is an approach already employed by some institutions, such as the police force (Rock 2007:39), to assist people who cannot access the written text to understand institutional documents. It is also widely used to enable people with a visual impairment to access written texts.

Having revisited findings for each research question, the following section draws conclusions, and sketches out areas for future research.

7.5 Conclusion

7.5.1 Drawing conclusions and addressing changes in the sector

As introduced earlier, Fairclough argues that “...in seeing language as discourse and as social practice, one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions” (2001:21). Following Fairclough, this research project has explored the asymmetries of power within AVR programmes in the UK through a close analysis of discursive practice, orienting analysis to two central, interrelated, and defining aspects of AVR – *voluntariness* and *informedness*. Combining CDA and LE methodological approaches has allowed me to explore critical aspects of the institutional-client relationship, extending our understanding of the nuances and tensions within the delivery of these programmes.

The study contributes to the bodies of research examining bureaucratic communication, multilingual institutional gatekeeping encounters, and contributes to research on the positioning of selves in regard to constructing identities, viewing identity as a flexible and negotiated concept.

In taking an ethnographic approach to the critical analysis of discourse, as Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski acknowledge regarding ethnographic methods, I do not “strive for general and replicable results” (2008:196). Conducting a critical and ethnographic analysis of discourse processes within AVR, I do not aim to make generalisations. My analysis relies on an understanding of the specific context in which the AVR programmes take place in the UK, and on the contextual environments of the two institutions, as well as my inextricable experience of working within AVR. I do not therefore aim to make generalisations regarding other AVR programmes, institutional gatekeeping encounters, or even other texts within the UK AVR programmes. My findings relate to this specific time and context; although they may generate further areas of research as a result. Following Oberhuber and Krzyżanowski (2008:197), I endeavoured to conduct sound ethnographic research by continually evaluating my research in terms of its transparency and reflexivity, in documenting the motivation for my research, my

research objectives, data collection methods, and decision-making process regarding coding and analysis.

This study has shown that these – often multilingual – gatekeeping encounters are complicated by the mixed motivations underpinning the programmes. The often conflicting and changing positions of the social actors within the AVR process (examined in this study) show that AVR occupies a heavily contested (McGhee and Bennett 2014b) and liminal space. I have evidenced how ideologies around AVR are discursively reinforced via rhetorical devices through IOM and Refugee Action’s institutional texts, variably constructing the voluntariness of return and providing distinct accounts of why these AVR programmes are needed and viable, given the criticisms levelled against them. The Rhetorical Discourse Analysis (RDA) framework has provided structure but also flexibility in order to address accounting work in both written texts and caseworkers’ talk. By combining RDA with an analysis of positioning devices, I have shown how caseworkers – contrary to the perceived ideologies underpinning the funding of AVR – challenge assumptions inherent in the institutional representations of institutional-client power, and aspects of top-down multilingualism. Caseworkers therefore variously problematise unequal relations of power. In both chapters five and six, caseworkers represent themselves as negotiating and mediating the relationship between the institution and the client. In chapter 5 they contextualise and mitigate the claims in institutional written texts analysed in chapter 4. Discursive analysis displays how caseworkers negotiate the difficult position in administering institutional resources. Using interpretative repertoires has allowed me to see how caseworkers across both organisations coherently employ these positioning devices to account for AVR, and present themselves as protecting institutional resources, or pushing for more resources for clients. In chapter 6, some caseworkers mediate top-down multilingualism, negotiating the gatekeeping of AVR information and subsequently clients’ opportunities to become informed about return.

By applying the analytic concepts of translanguaging and mode-switching to the context of AVR, this research has contributed to this relatively new field of study. Rather than analysing how translanguaging occurs in practice (an approach common to most studies in this field, e.g. Garcia 2009, Creese and Blackledge 2010), it has taken a different approach due to the data available. By analysing research interview data, this study has demonstrated how translanguaging is *represented* by caseworkers as communicative

strategies with multiple functions, looking at caseworkers language about language. Due to the aims of this research, the study focused on translanguaging to increase epistemic access; however, caseworkers also represented moving between communicative systems for other interactional goals, such as to reduce workload.

This study also contributes to the small but fast-growing body of AVR research examining the key tensions within the UK AVR programmes. This research focuses on the *voluntariness* and *informedness* of AVR and although other aspects of the AVR process would benefit from research (discussed more below), I believe this research has demonstrated the value of close discursive analysis of text and talk within the AVR process, a methodological approach rarely applied to this particular sphere of work.

Refugee Action recently announced (on the 27th July 2015) that the Home Office will be administering the AVR programmes from the 1st January 2016, merging them with the Home Office's internal 'Voluntary Departures' programme (which offers assistance with travel but not reintegration). Refugee Action's grant to administer the programmes will end, and it therefore seems likely the AVR programmes will change significantly. Refugee Action reports that the Home Office will cut pre-decision advice services for people unsure about AVR or their options, and terminate AVR programmes for irregular/undocumented migrants who cannot prove their vulnerability according the government definitions (appendix 7a).

Alongside this, the Home Office has released a consultation (entitled "Reforming support for failed asylum seekers and other illegal migrants") which proposes cutting access to welfare for rejected asylum seekers with children (2015b). This effectively extends the policy of so-called enforced destitution (McGhee and Bennett (2014b)) to children whose families are unwilling or unable to return. In this consultation, the Home Office also introduces the ideologically-significant move to re-categorise asylum seekers (with dependents) as illegal migrants as soon as their asylum application has been rejected, making explicit the Home Office's consideration that rejected asylum seekers have no right to welfare or to remain in the UK. In an online Home Office news story that introduces elements of the imminent Immigration Bill, entitled "New action to make Britain a harder place for illegal migrants", James Brokenshire, the Immigration Minister, describes how "illegal migrants" will be treated:

“Anyone who thinks the UK is a soft touch should be in no doubt — if you are here illegally, we will take action to stop you from working, renting a flat, opening a bank account or driving a car.” (Home Office 2015a)

This strongly suggests that the current limited context in which some clients apply for AVR seems likely to become further limited. Although little information is known about the new programmes, these proposed actions all point to an AVR scheme that will be ideologically placed within the migration control system.

With the potential termination of AVR applicants’ access to impartial and pre-decision advice (as currently provided by Refugee Action), the governmental clarification that rejected asylum seekers are categorised by the state as “illegal”, and the more hostile environment which the Home Office appears to be creating for “illegal immigrants”, it may perhaps become difficult for the Home Office to continue to label and discursively construct AVR as voluntary. The new scenario described in this recent announcement appears to represent the government’s proposed AVR programmes as not voluntary in terms of the service-provider’s modality (i.e. not impartial as conflicting with other institutional ‘burden-relieving’ goals), and increasingly not voluntary in terms of the clients’ socio-political context.

7.5.2 Limitations and areas for further study

Conducting this research has been logistically quite challenging, given the changes in service-provider and subsequent re-modelling of AVR service delivery. Yet this research, although undergoing necessary re-designs to accommodate these institutional changes, has benefitted from having access to further perspectives and experiences of AVR, providing me an opportunity to collect data from two quite different institutions. It is also a very interesting time to be researching AVR: with the news that the Home Office intends to bring AVR in-house, multiple new lines of research exist, introduced below.

When originally planning this research I had initially negotiated access to observe client-caseworker interactions and interview clients (subject to consent) regarding AVR, specific institutional documents, and their experiences of the return process. However, as detailed in section 3.2, I was unable to conduct these due to the closure of IOM’s

programmes, and the subsequent re-design of Refugee Action's operational approach. Since Gumperz's (1982) early research on intercultural communication, many studies have explored how different understandings of conversational inferencing and contextualisation cues may result in communication difficulties in particular institutional settings. Roberts' (1985) extensive research explores gatekeeping issues in superdiverse encounters similar to the AVR setting, and examines how participants' differing access to sociocultural contextual inferences may affect access to opportunities. Analysis of these key gatekeeping encounters would be extremely valuable in understanding how people may access their entitled resources, and adequately plan for return. The client-caseworker interaction is therefore still important research to undertake in the new context; however, it will be necessary to adapt to the changing circumstances in terms of constraints and opportunities of the new contexts of interaction. To reiterate my research interests in this data collection: I would be keen to examine how AVR is introduced, how components of the programmes are communicated and accessed, and how linguistic inequality is discursively managed, and importantly, challenged by social actors involved – specifically clients of the programmes.

Further, it would be beneficial to examine how Home Office staff orient to the voluntariness of return and position themselves relative to ideological arguments for the programmes. It would also seem important, in considering trust issues regarding AVR, to examine whether the AVR programmes continue to be labelled 'voluntary', given the potential credibility issues of doing so in an institutional context of hostility towards irregular migrants and rejected asylum seekers, and without the Home Office offering impartial advice.

Ethnographic observation, my experience working at IOM, and findings from the research interviews provide clear evidence that there is some confusion over responsibilities regarding planning return and reintegration, and although this is clearly an important topic, it was outside the scope of my research. However, an investigation into how responsibilities for individual tasks in the process (e.g. getting in contact post-return to access funds) are discursively negotiated in client-caseworker interactions would be beneficial in safeguarding clients' access to the service they are entitled to.

In analysing *Stories of Return*, although I selected all of Refugee Action's narratives (as in the time they numbered only 18), I was limited to choosing one of IOM's various

publications due to the large number they had produced since initiating the programmes in 1999. I selected what I observed to be the ‘main’ *Stories of Return* publication, in that it was the most used, and was a general edition including stories from people all around the world. However, I accept that had I selected another publication, different themes may have emerged, acknowledging that institutional approaches are not static, and may develop and change styles of communication, depending on contextual priorities and intended functions of the texts. It would be fruitful to consider in future research how AVR is represented in other texts – for example, in those directed at families, or solely at AVRIM clients, or indeed what texts the Home Office produces as the new service-providers.

In focusing in on the written multilingual aspects of AVR (ch.6), I necessarily backgrounded aspects of spoken multilingualism. This offered me valuable time and space to conduct very detailed analysis of caseworkers’ orientation to written multilingual practice, including a particular focus on receipts, which caseworkers regularly highlight as an area of concern. However, linguistic inequality is of course also shaped by spoken multilingual practice, impacting on clients’ potential for epistemic access to AVR material. Therefore, evaluating the Home Office approach to both spoken and written multilingual practice, and examining concepts the Home Office and its staff may have about clients’ linguistic repertoires, is crucial to ensuring clients are able to access appropriate AVR information to increase their opportunities in benefitting from a sustainable return. Specifically, it would be insightful to examine instances of translanguaging and mode-switching in client-caseworker spoken interactions, to understand what the function and implication of it is. Similarly, in regard to understanding clients’ opportunities for epistemic access (or informedness), it would be productive to investigate the triggers caseworkers use to engage with interpreters, or to request translations in these gatekeeping encounters.

Concluding note

It seems important to reiterate that, despite the criticisms AVR programmes face, I believe they can be of real benefit for those people wishing to return to their country of origin, and the financial reintegration and support assist them in the transition. In examining orientations to voluntariness, and ideological aspects of AVR, this study has shown how AVR is a complex and highly contested sphere of work. Although partly funded by the Home Office, caseworkers effectively negotiate the ideological dilemma of administering the AVR programmes, challenging institutional representations of all clients as having a choice, but displaying a commitment to the impartiality of their advice, being concerned with the welfare of the individual. Although opportunities for linguistic inequality exist in the provision of AVR, caseworkers from both organisations display resourcefulness when orienting to clients' superdiversity, and in negotiating top-down multilingualism in order to increase clients' epistemic access in a context of reduced budgets. It would seem beneficial for both clients and staff if the Home Office – as the new service-provider – follows some of the innovative approaches staff (and Refugee Action as an organisation) describe and propose in negotiating superdiversity. However, even if clients' epistemic access increases due to an improved understanding within the AVR programmes of the variance of people's linguistic repertoires and institutional knowledge, the fundamental trust problem – seemingly perpetuated by representations of return as voluntary in a context of increasing coercion – means that the Home Office may face significant challenges in making these programmes ethical and robust, and offering a 'dignified return'.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: IOM and Refugee Action AVR Leaflets

Appendix 1a: IOM AVR Leaflet

If you have been an asylum seeker at any time you can benefit from IOM's **Reintegration Assistance**. After discussing your needs with you, we will prepare an individual or family return plan.

- small business start up
- relocation grant
- baggage allowance
- job placement
- educational courses for adults and children
- vocational training
- short-term accommodation
- childcare



IOM assisted this Ugandan man. He is a carpenter. When he decided to return to Uganda, we helped him open a wood furniture-making workshop in partnership with one of his friends. He has now set up his own business.



IOM assisted this Ecuadorian woman. We helped her to set up a tailoring business at home by buying three sewing machines. This means that she can combine looking after her young son with earning a living.



IOM assisted this Sri Lankan man. We helped him return to Colombo and start a fishing business. He is doing well now and even employs an assistant.

10am - 1pm and 2pm - 4.30pm Monday to Friday.
No appointment is necessary.



Scotland

38 Queen Street, Glasgow G1 3DX Tel: 0141 548 8110

Wales & South West

Park House Business Centre, 10 Park Street, Bristol BS1 5HX Tel: 0117 907 4777

Midlands

eOffice, Ground Floor, Norfolk House, Smallbrook Queensway, Birmingham B5 4LJ
Tel: 0121 633 5074

North East

1st Floor, 100 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4LT Tel: 0113 237 3077

North West

Regus Reception - 5th Floor, Horton House, Exchange Flags, Liverpool L2 3PF
Tel: 0151 244 5041

Piccadilly House, 49 Piccadilly, Manchester M1 2AP Tel: 0161 212 1463



IOM International Organization for Migration

IOM (UK)

www.iomuk.org

London & South East

21 Westminister Palace Gardens • Artillery Row • London SW1P 1RR

Tel: 020 7233 0001 • Fax: 020 7233 3001 • email: iomuk@iom.int



Actions co-financed by Community Funds.

01/10/09



Voluntary Return

Thinking of going back to your home country?
Talk to us. We may be able to help you.

0800 783 2332




IOM International Organization for Migration

IOM (UK) • www.iomuk.org

21 Westminister Palace Gardens • Artillery Row • London SW1P 1RR

Tel: 020 7233 0001 • Fax: 020 7233 3001 • e-mail: iomuk@iom.int

Returning home with IOM's assistance



IOM International Organization for Migration

Who we are
We are an international organisation - **NOT** part of the UK government. Our headquarters are in Geneva and we have offices in over 100 countries worldwide.

We assist in managing migration for the benefit of all - the individuals concerned and society at large.

What we can do for you
We work in partnership with a number of refugee advice agencies throughout the UK to provide you with assistance for a dignified and orderly return to your home country.

Additionally, we may be able to help you resettle with Reintegration Assistance. This would depend on your individual circumstances.

We will help you to return home only if you wish to do so.

How you can apply

If

- Your visa has expired
- You are staying illegally in the UK
- You are an asylum seeker who:
 - is waiting for a Home Office decision
 - has had your application refused
 - is appealing against refusal
 - has been given Discretionary Leave

Fill in a voluntary return application form
For a form

- Call us on 0800 783 2332
- Download from www.iomuk.org
- Visit our offices


Send your completed form to IOM

An adviser from IOM will process your application

He/she will help with your documents and IOM will pay for your travel

On the day of your departure, an IOM officer will meet you at the airport, and if need be on arrival in your country too


Need help to return?



IOM International Organization for Migration

- Help with travel documents
- All travel paid for
- Reintegration Assistance

Call IOM FREE on 0800 783 2332



Appendix 1b: Refugee Action AVR Leaflet

6 page folding leaflet: page 5, 6, 1

Choices offices



London
Victoria Station, Victoria Underground Station



Manchester
Shude Hill Metrolink Interchange



Leeds
Victoria Coach Station

Contact us

Telephone us: 0808 800 0007
Email us: choices@refugee-action.org.uk
www.choices-avr.org.uk

London
Victoria Charity Centre, 11 Belgrave Road, London SW1V 1RB
t: 0808 800 0007 f: 020 7828 5334

Birmingham
The Jewellery Business Centre, 95 Spencer Street, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham B18 6DA
t: 0121 201 3070 f: 0121 523 3044

Leeds
16 Lower Brunswick Street, Leeds LS2 7PU
t: 0113 302 3050 f: 0113 243 6065

Manchester
23-37 Edge Street, Manchester M4 1HW
t: 0161 441 4149 f: 0161 834 7715
e: ChoicesDutyMCR@refugee-action.org.uk

Wolverhampton
t: 01902 311554 e: Choices@moentre.org.uk

Liverpool
64 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5SD
t: 0151 702 6300 f: 0151 709 6684

East Midlands
Chancery House, 7 Millstone Lane, Leicester LE1 5JN
t: 0116 261 6207 e: ChoicesDutyBHAM@refugee-action.org.uk

Bristol
45 Easton Business Centre, Felix Road, Bristol BS5 0HE
t: 0117 941 5976 e: SWandWales@refugee-action.org.uk

Cardiff
t: 02920 432972 e: SWandWales@refugee-action.org.uk

Glasgow
t: 0141 223 7915
e: ChoicesDutyGlasgow@refugee-action.org.uk

We also have staff in Sheffield, Newcastle and Portsmouth.

ENGLISH




Choices

Assisted Voluntary Return service

0808 800 0007

Call **Choices** free if you would like to:

- return voluntarily to your country, or
- talk to someone confidentially to decide whether to return



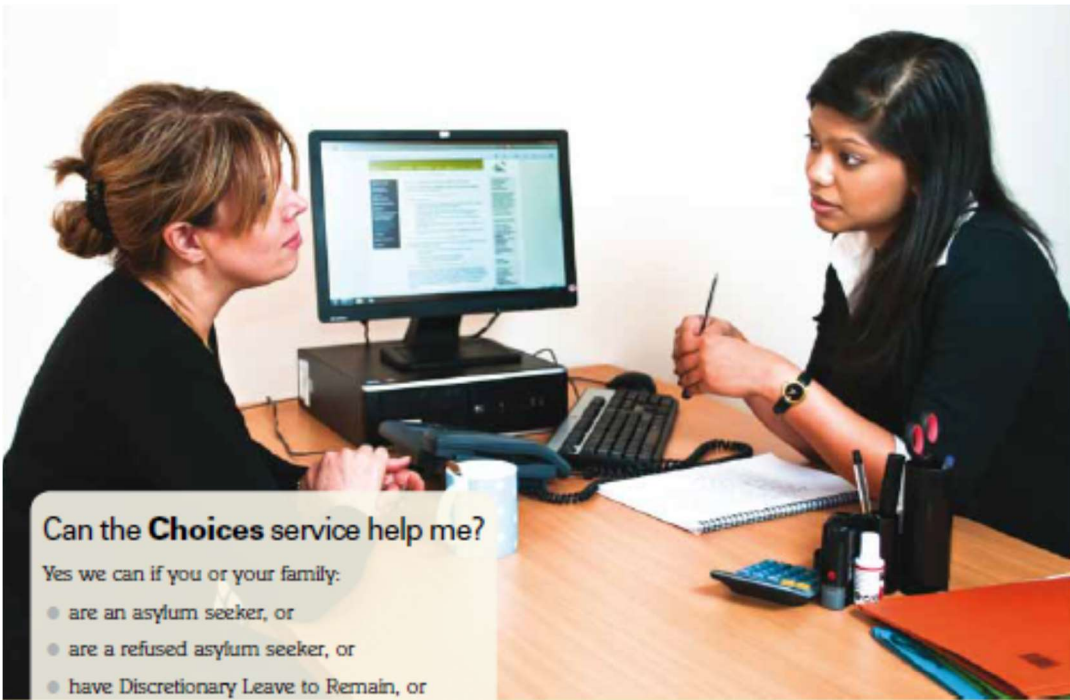


Choices
Victoria Charity Centre
11 Belgrave Road
London SW1V 1RB
© 2012
registered charity no. 263660
registered company no. 1503454



Co-financed by the European Return Fund
working together to manage migration

6-page folding leaflet: pages 2, 3, 4



Can the **Choices service help me?**

Yes we can if you or your family:

- are an asylum seeker, or
- are a refused asylum seeker, or
- have Discretionary Leave to Remain, or
- are in the UK with no legal status (an 'irregular migrant').

Choices gives free, confidential advice and information to help you decide whether to return voluntarily. If you decide to return, we will:

- help you plan your return
- offer support at the airport and in your country
- apply for travel documents and pay for the flight
- in some cases, give you financial support after you have returned.

0808 800 0007


What is the **Choices service?**

The Choices service is independent – we are not part of the government and will not give them information unless you ask us to.

We offer confidential, independent and impartial advice and information to asylum seekers, refugees and people in the UK with no legal status (irregular migrants).

What does the **Choices service offer?**

- Confidential advice and information if you would like to think about whether or not to return voluntarily.
- If you decide not to return, referral to other services.
- If you decide to return to your country, we will support you to:
 - Plan for your return – for example the journey from the airport to your home town/village, where you will live, what you would like to do, contacting family.
 - Give you information on support that may be available in your country (education, employment, training, business packages).
 - Apply for travel documents and pay for the flight.
 - For families and some others, give you financial support after you have returned.



• photography by Atin Oumina, Claudia Janke and Alstock • design: Wild Strawberry Communications

Appendix 2: *Stories of Return*

Appendix 2a. IOM Stories of Return

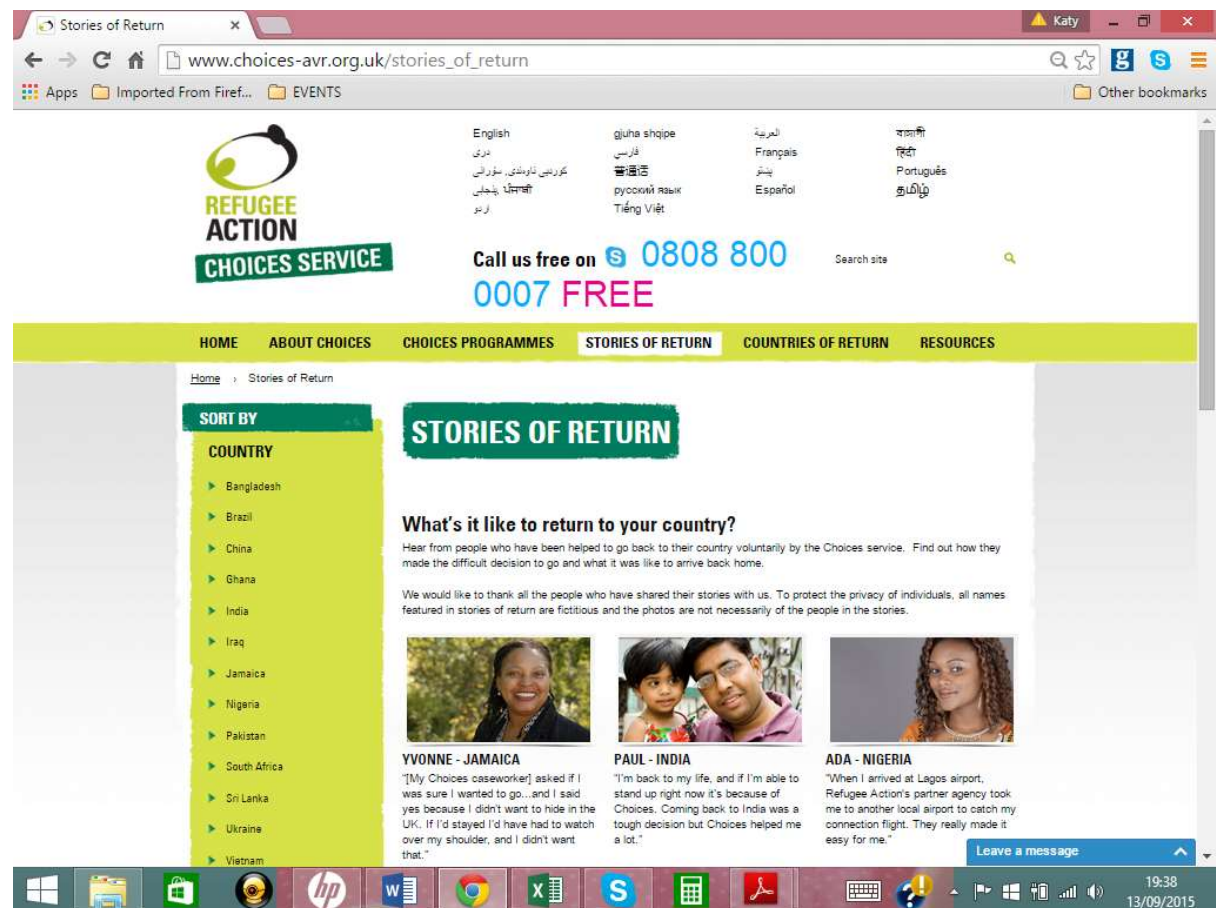
[please see hard copy]

Appendix 2b: Refugee Action *Stories of Return*

Stories accessed on 13/05/2014 from: http://www.choices-avr.org.uk/stories_of_return

I have included two screen-grabs of the Refugee Action Choices website, where the *Stories of Return* appear. Screen-grab 1 shows the introduction page for the *Stories of Return* where the website visitor can choose which story they would like to read. They can also choose via country on the menu on the left hand side. Screen-grab 2 is included to demonstrate how each of the individual stories are presented. Text from the individual stories are included below.

Screen-grab 1:



Screen-grab 2:

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the 'Stories of Return' page on the Choices for Refugees website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: www.choices-avr.org.uk/stories_of_return/127_munaki_-_zimbabwe. The website header includes the 'REFUGEE ACTION CHOICES SERVICE' logo, a phone number '0808 800 0007 FREE', and a search bar. The navigation menu includes 'HOME', 'ABOUT CHOICES', 'CHOICES PROGRAMMES', 'STORIES OF RETURN', 'COUNTRIES OF RETURN', and 'RESOURCES'. The 'STORIES OF RETURN' section is active, showing a list of countries under 'SORT BY COUNTRY': Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Ghana, India, Iraq, Jamaica, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe. The main content area features a large profile for 'MUNAKI - ZIMBABWE' with a photo of a man. Below the photo is the 'Background information' section, which states: 'Munaki', 53, has had several periods living in the UK since 1998. He first came as a student, and then returned several times to be with his family who lived in the UK. The 'The decision to go' section follows, stating: 'Although he didn't want to leave the UK, his health was suffering from the frustration of having no legal status or right to work. He said, "Waking up every day at home and doing nothing, I decided I have to go back." Munaki heard about Choices assisted voluntary return service when he reported at the UKBA reporting centre. He was very pleased with the service. "I was so happy when I spoke to [caseworker], she sent me the papers the next morning."'. To the right of the main profile is a 'RELATED STORIES' section with two entries: 'JIAN - CHINA' with a photo of a man and a quote: 'Choices helped me to do my application and go back. They were fine and everything was good.'; and 'AHMED - BANGLADESH' with a photo of a man and a quote: 'My caseworker was very helpful. She helped me get the money very quickly.''. At the bottom right of the main content area is a 'Leave a message' button. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the date and time as 19:34 on 13/09/2015, along with various application icons.

[1] Jacob- Zimbabwe

“My kids are a priority. They have settled in very well [in Zimbabwe}... My family in Zimbabwe are happy - nobody likes it when family members are away.” Jacob

Life in the UK

Jacob spent four years in the UK with his wife and children, one of whom was born here. They applied for asylum, but were refused.

The decision to go

“I decided to leave the UK because I was tired of waiting for status, and I wanted the best for my children.” says Jacob. “I heard about Choices online and through other people in the UK. They helped me by organising everything and getting me transport back home.”

Arrival

Jacob arrived in Zimbabwe in December 2012. “You don’t know what to expect when you return home,” he said. “I’ve met a lot of guys from the military, the police and I’ve not had any problems...I don’t feel threatened at all”.

Jacob’s family picked him and his family up at the airport. “Naturally, it was an emotional time. When we left my oldest child was a small baby,” he said.

Using his HND in Business and Computing, Jacob and his wife have set up a computer and photocopying business in a shop. He used the reintegration money from Choices to pay for his children’s school fees. “My kids are a priority. They have settled in very well. They are very happy,” said Jacob, “My wife is very happy to be back in Zimbabwe too...My family in Zimbabwe are happy - nobody likes it when family members are away.” The Choices overseas partner, Caritas Zimbabwe, helped Jacob to access the reintegration money.

Plans and hopes for the future

“I’d like to improve my business, but when you don’t have enough capital, it’s always a struggle,” said Jacob. “I’d like to set up a small computer school, set up a supermarket. I have a lot of ideas,” He said. “My wife would also like to set up a nursery for children. She has an HND in teaching children with special needs. The problem is financing and licensing,” Jacob told Choices. However, he said he’d recommend returning to Zimbabwe. “There are a lot of opportunities...I’ve not seen any violence and while a lot of people have had trouble for having been in the UK, I’ve never had any trouble for this.”

[2] Sitheni - Zimbabwe

Background information

Sitheni*, 43, came to the UK in 2001 on a student visa and later claimed asylum on the basis of the situation in Zimbabwe. Her asylum claim was turned down. Sitheni had three children in Zimbabwe who she was supporting from the UK, and she greatly missed them.

The decision to go

Sitheni made the decision to return home after 10 years mainly because she missed her children so much and wasn't able to work and send money back to Zimbabwe any more. "It was very difficult for me to decide to leave the UK," she said. "But I couldn't work, I couldn't look after myself or anyone else.. I wasn't able to help my family any more. I was becoming a burden to other people...so I thought maybe coming back home was the best....I needed to be with my children."

"I felt nervous when I got to the airport because you've heard so many stories about what might happen to you when you get here if you've claimed asylum." Sitheni

Preparing to return

She heard about Choices from UKBA. "Once I had made up my mind that I wanted to come back, the process was a bit slow for me!" she said. "But I got there in the end." Sitheni was entitled to financial assistance under the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) of up to £1,500. She planned to set up a catering company with the money.

Arrival

"I felt very nervous when I got to the airport because you've heard so many stories about what might happen to you when you get here if you've claimed asylum," said Sitheni. "There was a bit of confusion at Harare airport as one of my cases was left in Nairobi, but I finally got it." Choices partner in Zimbabwe, Caritas, met Sitheni at the

airport and then she stayed with her sister. Sitheni was very happy to see her family again, “Coming back has been a wonderful thing, getting to be with my children again and my mum and sisters,” she said.

Plans and hopes for the future

Caritas has helped Sitheni spend her reintegration money on equipment for her catering business. However, after five months, business has been slow. Sitheni said it has been difficult to survive with very little income, and that she’s greatly relied on family to support her. “With my reintegration money, I think I should have started a project that would give me income every day.” She realises that there is more work to do, “I need to market myself, but I’ve been away for 10 years and getting back into the system, I never thought it would be this hard.” However, Sitheni enjoys being with her family, “they are so supportive and that was one of the main reasons I have come back. They always say that home is best.”

Choices partner in Zimbabwe

Caritas Zimbabwe is Choices partner who assists people who return with AVR.

*Names have been changed to protect the people who've shared their story with us.

[3] Munaki - Zimbabwe

Background information

Munaki*, 53, has had several periods living in the UK since 1998. He first came as a student, and then returned several times to be with his family who lived in the UK.

The decision to go

Although he didn't want to leave the UK, his health was suffering from the frustration of having no legal status or right to work. He said, "Waking up every day at home and doing nothing, I decided I have to go back." Munaki heard about Choices assisted voluntary return service when he reported at the UKBA reporting centre. He was very pleased with the service. "I was so happy when I spoke to [caseworker], she sent me the papers the next morning."

Preparing to return

Under the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP), Munaki was entitled to up to £1500 reintegration assistance money, including £500 for immediate needs. He planned to use the remainder of the money to set up a poultry business, something he already had experience in.

"I thought I wasn't going to get the £1,000 that remained, but I met the Caritas guys and told them about my project. It was so simple and smooth. It didn't take time like people had told me." Munaki

Arrival

Munaki was met at Harare airport by Choices partner, Caritas. They transferred him to his home town, "I had a good journey and the staff were so good to me," he said.

Plans and hopes for the future

Munaki used the first £500 to buy groceries, pay for electricity and buy some equipment. Then Caritas helped him with his plans for the business, scaling them down a

little from Munaki's original plans so that he had more chance of success. The remaining £1,000 was spent on chicken runs and other materials. "I thought I wasn't going to get the £1,000 that remained, but I met the Caritas guys and told them about my project, it was so simple and smooth. It didn't take time like people had told me...Caritas helped me with buying the materials, hiring a truck to move it and everything," he said.

However, Munaki said the money didn't quite cover what he wanted to do and that he had to ask family in the UK for money to cover his costs. Power cuts have also been a problem, resulting in the loss of a few young chicks who didn't survive without heaters working.

Munaki would like to buy a generator to address the power failure problem and prevent losing further chicks. He'd also like to expand his business. "If I can manage to have 500 birds at a time, I can start another project again. I'd like to start a piggery," he said.

Choices local partner

The Choices partner for reintegration assistance in Zimbabwe is Caritas,
<http://www.caritas.org/worldmap/africa/zimbabwe.html>

*Names have been changed.

[4] ISHAN - SRI LANKA

“[Choices] were very good to us. They told us about the money we could get and that we could use it for business and for my daughter’s school fees.” Ishan

Life in the UK

Ishan fled the civil war in Sri Lanka in 2000 and claimed asylum in the UK. His wife joined him four years later and they had a daughter together. However, life was very difficult in the UK as he couldn’t work.

The decision to go

Two main reasons prompted Ishan and his family to return to Sri Lanka. Ishan and his wife had a daughter who they’d left in Sri Lanka and wanted to see again. Ishan had also been detained in the UK, and was afraid of being detained again.

Ishan’s wife saw a Choices leaflet at her reporting centre, and they decided to use the service to return home with the Choices family programme, AVRFC. “They explained everything to us and helped us make an application,” said Ishan. “They were very good to us. They told us about the money we could get and that we could use it for business and for my daughter’s school fees.”*

Arrival

Ishan and his wife returned to Sri Lanka in 2012. “It was very nice coming back, at first,” said Ishan. “Everyone was happy to see us and we were back with our older daughter. It was like a party for a few weeks, but then everything got hard.” Ishan’s business plans didn’t work out as he’d hoped. He said, “I bought a truck to start a business but it didn’t work. I had to get a loan for it and my business didn’t make enough money to pay back the bank and I lost the truck. There are no jobs and it’s difficult to survive.”

However, Siyath, Choices overseas partner in Sri Lanka have made a big difference. “Siyath have helped us a lot,” said Ishan. “They’ve given us advice with business and help with school for our daughter.”

*each family member returning under AVRFC is entitled to £2,000 reintegration assistance money

[5] JANITHA - SRI LANKA

“(My caseworkers from the Choices Service) explained everything to me. They were very kind.” Janitha

Life in the UK

Janitha left his family in Sri Lanka in 2008 and came to the UK. He said, “Life in the UK was different to what I expected...I wasn’t allowed to work so I couldn’t help my family. I had debts to pay. It was hard being away from my family. My wife and daughters were alone.”

The decision to go

Janitha heard about the Choices service both at his reporting centre and through his friends and decided that he wanted to be back with his family. He found the Choices service helpful. “They explained everything to me. They were very kind.”

Arrival

Janitha returned to Sri Lanka in 2012. “I came back to my family and my house and things weren’t very different,” he said. “I had my business to work in and my family were happy I was back.” Janitha runs a leisure wear business from his home with his wife and daughter. He employs four people to work for him. Life is not easy though. “We have to work hard and long hours. We are trying very hard. We now have some orders, but they are not all the time, just sometimes...We have to pay our workers, our loan, and school for my daughter.”

Janitha said the Choices’ overseas partner, Siyath, was helpful. “They call to find out how we are and if we’re having any problems. They are doing a very good job,” he said.

[6] Dharma - Sri Lanka

Background information

Dharma*, 40, and his 32-year-old wife Arjuna* made the decision to return to Sri Lanka after they had been living in the UK for several years. Dharma originally moved to London in 2000 on a visa and worked in bars. Arjuna had moved to join him in 2004 and they had a daughter the following year. The couple found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet in the UK. Dharma said, "When my daughter was born in 2005 it changed my life and we needed more money."

The decision to go

"When we took the decision to go back to Sri Lanka we thought we would have more freedom and everything would be better," said Dharma. "We also have another daughter who we had not seen for many years so we wanted to see her, though we had always talked on the internet." Arjuna explained that she had been in college in the UK which was a positive experience, but she also decided it was best to return home.

"We went and met my mother and we stayed there for the first few weeks. In those first weeks we felt very happy. We hadn't seen the beach in Colombo and the sea for so long." Dharma

Preparing to return

"Choices sorted out everything," said Dharma. "Between applying and leaving it was quite a short period of time. We wanted to leave quickly once we had made the decision." The family was contacted regularly before and again after they returned home by their Choices caseworker to help them plan their return. They have also been put in touch with the Choices partner agency Siyath in Sri Lanka. They say they would ideally like support from them for more than the allocated six months.

Arrival

Dharma said: “No-one was there to meet us when we got back because it was a month before the country’s ‘meet and greet’ service was set up, but we went and met my wife’s mother and we stayed there for the first few weeks. In those first weeks we felt very happy. We hadn’t seen the beach in Colombo and the sea for so long.” Some people have suggested to Dharma that he must have a lot of money after being in the UK for so many years, and some people are suspicious, but he has not had any major problems.

Plans and hopes for the future

Dharma says the family now has some money and a house to live in^[i], but he is concerned about making money in the future, particularly as prices have risen in Sri Lanka. He and his wife are also bonding with their daughter again, who has been living with her grandmother. Dharma has bought a vehicle and is hoping to start a business giving tour guides in the city. He said: “We are now thinking about our two daughters’ future, looking at schools for our children and many things. We have some plans.” Although Arjuna is happy to be home, she says that she is bored in the house. In the UK, she had attended college and so had a lot more to do. Both said they would not advise everyone to return home, it depends on personal circumstances. They would advise people to contact Choices and find out more about their options.

Choices local partner

The Choices partner for reintegration assistance in Sri Lanka is The Siyath Foundation

[i] Returning under the Assisted Voluntary Return for Families and Children (AVRFC) programme, Dharma and his family are entitled to up to £2,000 each (a total of £6,000) for reintegration activities such as education, starting a business, and paying rent for 6 months.* Names have been changed to protect the people who shared their story with us.

[7] Ben - South Africa

Background information

Ben*, 47, is from South Africa and in 2003, came to Newcastle to study. After he was diagnosed with a serious illness in 2006, he had a dispute with his wife's family in South Africa which led to him losing his house and being threatened. In fear of returning to South Africa, Ben claimed asylum but his application was refused.

The decision to go

Ben was worried that he wouldn't be able to get the medication that he'd been taking in the UK back at home. Once he established that his medication was available in South Africa and also that he could live with his mother, he made the decision to apply for assisted voluntary return.

Preparing to return

It was a hard decision to return to South Africa but Ben really appreciated the Choices service. He was sent an application form and received subsequent advice by phone and email. "My caseworker was good to me," he said. "I found the service so helpful." He particularly benefited from being met by a Choices caseworker and receiving his start card at the UK airport to help him financially when he first returned.

"One difficult thing about returning to South Africa was that things had become more expensive, especially public transport. However it was really good to be with my family again and get moral support." Ben

Ben would advise anyone else considering returning to South Africa to plan properly before they return, particularly as the cost of living has increased. He recommends that people research the type of business that they might be able to set up in advance and also to contact their family or someone else they might stay with before returning.

Arrival

When Ben arrived at the airport in South Africa he was met by his brother and was then greeted by his entire family when they got home. “Although they were concerned for my safety, my family were happy because it had been a long time since they’d seen me,” said Ben. “One difficult thing about returning to South Africa was that things had become more expensive, especially public transport. However it was really good to be with my family again and get moral support.”

Plans and hopes for the future

Ben is keen not to be dependent on anyone and has set up a business in partnership with his brother. He has used the reintegration money that he received through qualifying for the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) to buy materials for his business and he has also applied for a scholarship to study social work.

*Names have been changed.

[8] Salim - Pakistan

Background information

Salim*, from Pakistan, had been in the UK on a student visa when he applied for an extension but was refused. Then his father was killed in connection with a business dispute, which had been part of his original reason for leaving Pakistan. Salim was living with his wife and two children, a seven year old son and a daughter, four. He said: "I had to make the decision about what to do. It was a struggle for me, but I eventually made the choice to go back."

The decision to go

Salim heard about Choices when one of his friends who had applied for asylum handed him a leaflet about the service. He said: "When I heard about Choices, it sounded like the right thing for me. I had chats with caseworkers and it all went quite well. I spoke to my children a couple of times about going back to Pakistan, about the house we would live in and if they would live there permanently. Thankfully, my son understood fully and is the kind of child who took it really well." Salim felt that the situations of family crisis in Pakistan and his legal status in the UK were causing him stress and so it was best to return home.

Preparing to return

Salim felt that the Choices caseworkers were very co-operative but that they didn't have as much detailed information about Pakistan as he had expected. It was also a slower process than he thought it would be, taking 4-6 weeks for the case to be accepted and then 18 weeks for the family to return.[i]

"We will start our business in the downstairs quarters of our house. We had to make sure we had a fool-proof plan for our kids... I think so far I have made the right decision." Salim

Arrival

At the airport in Islamabad, Pakistan, everything went well and they met family including Salim's mother. "The only thing we struggled with at first was the heat!" said Salim. He had organised his children's education with the help of the Choices caseworker in the UK even before the family had moved home. "The children are studying at a good school and we have accommodation," said Salim.

Plans and hopes for the future

Salim and his wife plan to start a clothing business. He said: "We will start our business in the downstairs quarters of our house. My wife is very good at making clothes so we will buy material from the wholesaler and make clothes. Her sister had been running this business. We had to make sure we had a fool proof plan for our kids." Salim has received one third of the money he and his family are entitled to^[ii], which has been spent on education and setting up home. He says the only problem can be the length of time it takes to receive all of the payments. "We just need to get our business going now," he said. "I think so far that I have made the right decision. My wife agrees we have taken the right step."

Choices local partner

The Choices partner for reintegration assistance in Pakistan is Weldo – www.weldo.org

*names have been changed.

[i] It takes up to a month for UKBA to decide on an application for return, and then, depending on how easy it is to get travel documents, from 2 weeks to 2 months for people to return home. For families, this process may take longer, as there are multiple people to do the process for.

[ii] Returning under the Assisted Voluntary Return for Families and Children (AVRFC) programme, each family member is entitled to up to £2,000 each (a total of £8,000 for

Salim's family) for reintegration activities such as education, starting a business, and paying rent for 6 months.

[9] James - Nigeria

Background information

James*, 33, is from Nigeria and came to London in 2010 for a holiday with his partner and two year old daughter. Whilst in the UK, James learnt that someone was destroying his property and making threats on his life, and in fear of returning to Nigeria, he claimed asylum.

The decision to go

In 2011, James heard that the person that was threatening him had died and he decided that it would be safe for him and his family to return to Nigeria. He was given a leaflet about the Choices service and applied for the Assisted Voluntary Return for Families and Children Programme (AVRFC). "The service was very good, it's very good to be helped to return home," said James. He would advise anyone considering return to Nigeria to go back as long as it is safe for them.

"I have used some of our reintegration money to start renting an apartment. My wife is working with me running the family business again, buying and selling clothes and it's going well. My daughter is also back at nursery school and she's doing fine." James

Arrival

James and his family arrived in Nigeria in August 2011. "Me and my family are fine now," says James. "We are happy to be back home. I have used some of our reintegration money to start renting an apartment. My wife is working with me running the family business again, buying and selling clothes and it's going well. My daughter is also back at nursery school and she's doing fine. Things are moving on for me and I'm getting back on my feet again."

Plans and hopes for the future

James is now looking forward to his future in Nigeria. “I hope to be a successful person, flourish more in my business and grow more as a professional.”

* Names have been changed to protect the people who have shared their story with us.

[10] Salar - Iraqi Kurdistan

“I am just really amazed at the development that I saw in the airport, - the city has become beautiful”.

Life in the UK

Salar came to the UK in 2008 as an asylum seeker, and was given five years leave to remain. But he found life very difficult. “Socially it was really hard to cope in the UK without my family.” Finding work was also a problem. “I got used to working in Kurdistan but it was very difficult in the UK. I was looking for a job but couldn’t get one.”

The decision to go

Salar decided to contact Choices rather than apply for a renewal of his leave to remain. “My family, they were all encouraging me to come back” says Salar. “I found out that Kurdistan is now developed, and I could see the change there is.”

Preparing to return

“Choices explained to me all the help I can get,” says Salar. “I am very happy about the level of care I have received. It is a very good start for me.”

Arrival

“I was really crying because it was very emotional to see my family, says Salar. “My father has passed away, so I am living with my mother, sisters and brothers. My mother said that she would never ever let me go again.

I am just really amazed at the development that I saw in the airport, - the city has become beautiful.”

Qandil, Choices’ partner agency in Iraq and Iraq Kurdistan, have helped Salar apply for support for his future business. “They have also explained about organisations that can help me in the future,” says Salar.

Plans and hopes for the future

“I had a shop before in Kurdistan for two years selling women’s clothes,” says Salar. “I have a plan to set up the same business again. I have rented a shop, and now I am in a position to buy and sell clothes. It should be a good business. If I am successful then the next thing is to think about marriage and that is going to be my next goal. It is very important to get married and to start a family. I am very happy.”

[11] Nebez - Iraqi Kurdistan

Background information

Nebez came to the UK six years ago because he had a lot of problems with another family where he lived and he was in danger. He claimed asylum when he came to the UK but his claim was rejected more than once. "I became so tired of it and I missed my family so much," he said. "I thought I would be more content if I returned home."

The decision to go

Nebez was scared before returning home. He felt that six years had been a long time to be away. However he missed his family. "I learnt English and thought this would help me coming home, because I can speak more than one language. I heard about Choices and the caseworker was very good to me. They told me about the financial assistance I was entitled to under the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) which was up to £1500," Nebez said.

"I heard about Choices and the caseworker was very good to me. They told me about the financial assistance I was entitled to which was up to £1500." Nebez

Preparing to return

Once Nebez had decided to return, his caseworker helped him to plan how he might find work in Iraq. "I thought my caseworker was a good person. He told me everything I needed to know to go back, said Nebez. "I found the process at the UK airport quite easy. I was given a start card with some of the money on it and told what I was to expect going through the airports."

Arrival

"My brother and my friends were there to meet me. That was great," said Nebez. He was happy to be home and discovered that much has changed in Kurdistan since he left.

A lot of the problems he had before aren't problems anymore. However, he has found it difficult to find a job. He has had a temporary job, but would like a more permanent and stable job in the future.

Plans and hopes for the future

So far Nebez has spent the money he has received on rent but he hopes he can find a job and buy a house. He is also planning to marry. He said: "I am living with my brother and I feel happy. I want to build a new life."

Choices partner in Iraq

The partner agency in Iraq is Qandil, a Swedish non-governmental development organisation.

[12] Rebwar - Iraqi Kurdistan

Background information

Rebwar, 25, is from Iraqi Kurdistan. Working as a policeman he believed he was in danger so he fled to the UK and applied for asylum.

The decision to go

After living in the UK for four years, one reason Rebwar decided to return to Iraq was that his asylum claim was refused. However, the main reason that he did not hesitate to apply to go home was that his mother was very ill. She was in a coma and he thought she might be dying.

Preparing to return

After Rebwar had an appointment with his Choices caseworker and told him about his mother's illness, a flight was booked for him very quickly. "The service was phenomenal," said Rebwar. "I never expected that kind of service, everything was set up perfectly. It was good to be met and given assistance at the UK airport and I've been shown a lot of respect."

"I feel everything is mine here. I've got my own stuff around me." Rebwar

Arrival

Rebwar returned to Erbil airport in June 2011, and when he first got back he found things difficult. He said that he was scared and felt like the future was uncertain. After he'd been home a few days though, he was surprised at the changes that had taken place over the four years that he'd been away. He said that when he was last in Iraq, the country was devastated. But now he feels there's a much better infrastructure, cleaner streets and better communications.

Plans and hopes for the future

With his reintegration money Rebwar has rented a house and says it has made him feel independent. “I feel everything is mine here, I’ve got my own stuff around me.” He has started work in a business with his uncle, supplying materials to companies. Rebwar’s mother’s health has also improved and his family are happy to have him back home. “I can see the smile of happiness on my mother’s face,” he says.

It has taken Rebwar time to readjust to Iraq, particularly to the weather and to the people. But he says that the best things about returning to his country are starting over again without fear, making a fresh start and regaining independence.

Choices local partner

The Choices partner for reintegration assistance in Iraq is Qandil - www.qandil.org

[13] Akram - India

Background information

Akram* came to the UK in 2004, where he claimed asylum. He was refused and, although he had a science degree in computer technology, legally he was not permitted to work.

The decision to go

He said, "I met a friend who told me there were people who could help me to voluntarily return to India, so I contacted them [Choices]. One day I would think it was better to go back to India and the next day think 'How can I leave this country?' I had experienced so much in the UK." In addition to his situation in the UK, one of the factors that made Akram decide to return was the economic growth of India which he read and heard about. In the end, Akram decided his best option was to return to India and try and build a new life.[i]

"When I got back some friends were waiting for me at the airport... They took me to meet my parents. They were very happy; I had not seen them in a long time." Akram

Preparing to return

Akram was living in Berkshire, and was referred to the Birmingham office where his Choices caseworker spoke to him by telephone. He said: "If he ever needed documents to arrange my return I would fax them or email them over." Akram was generally very happy with the process around the Choices programme but said he would have preferred face-to-face meetings.[ii]

Arrival

"When I got back some friends were waiting at the airport," said Akram. "They took me to their home and let me stay there temporarily and afterwards they took me to meet my parents. They were very happy; I had not seen them in a long time." Akram has met members of Caritas India, the partner agency for Choices in Chennai, and he has so far

been helped by Tanjivor Multipurpose Society, who are also Choices partners. He said: “Someone from Tanjivor Multipurpose Society came to my house after I gave them the address and they checked whether, mentally, I needed any support. They are located near my home town and they are ready to help me in any way.” Akram has also reconnected with old friends. He said, “I am meeting one of my childhood friends just this evening. It has been good to connect with him again.”

Plans and hopes for the future

Akram is hoping to open a small restaurant in Chennai and get married one day. He said: “If somebody can guide me, after a month I will have local knowledge. I am thinking, ‘can I make my dream come true?’ Choices have told me £1000 is the money I have left for the business. If I also get a loan I can pay it back[iii]. I just want to make my dream come true.”

Choices local partner

The Choices partner for reintegration assistance in India is Caritas India – www.caritasindia.org

* Names have been changed.

[i] As a refused asylum seeker, Akram was eligible for the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) through Choices.

[ii] We can arrange face to face meetings for people that find it difficult to discuss their situation over the telephone. Some people live far from our offices, and others prefer telephone conversations.

[iii] Before taking out a loan we strongly recommend that returnees speak to their local partner about their options.

[14] Enam - Ghana

“I’ve set up my own barber’s shop and it’s doing well. I also have my own apartment and my wife is pregnant and the baby is due next week. Life is good now.”

Life in the UK

Enam sought asylum in the UK but his application was refused. He was detained in an immigration removal centre where he found information about the Choices service.

The decision to go

“I decided I had to go home because I wanted to make my life better” says Enam. A friend told me that if you go back to Ghana with Choices they can help you to establish yourself. My application to return was accepted and before I left for Ghana, Choices gave me £500 to help me when I returned.”

“I’ve set up my own barber’s shop and it’s doing well. I also have my own apartment and my wife is pregnant and the baby is due next week. Life is good now.”

Arrival

Enam arrived in Ghana in May 2012 and he admits that it was difficult at first. “You feel like you’re taking ten steps back,” he says. “But Refugee Action Choices service helped me with £1500 to establish myself with. I’ve set up my own barber’s shop and it’s doing well. I have my own apartment. My wife is pregnant and the baby is due next week. Life is good now.”

Enam has also been helped by Agreds, Refugee Action’s partner agency in Ghana.

“Agreds Ghana is one of the most fantastic organisations I have come across in my life” says Enam. There is a lady there who is absolutely amazing. You can call her up and she gives you support and she makes you feel at home. Refugee Action Choices service are also doing a fantastic job.”

Plans and hopes for the future

“My hope for the future is to support my son to have a better education and to create a better life for my children’s children. I hope my business will improve and I plan to open another barber’s salon. You can have a better life here in Ghana. There’s no place like home.”

[15] Hua - China

Life in the UK

Hua* is 25 and in 2010 she went to Belfast to study at University. In January 2013 she had a baby boy.

The decision to go

Hua applied for an extension to her visa but it was rejected and she was also unable to get legal status for her baby in the UK. The UK Border Agency told her about the Choices service and she decided to apply to return to China.

“My message to other people considering returning to China is that the Choices Service will definitely help you. Choices is a good choice!”

Preparing to return

“The Choices service was very helpful” says Hua. “It’s good to know someone is there for you. They organised travel documents for me and my baby and booked the flight ticket. I returned with the Assisted Voluntary Returns for Families and Children programme which meant I was entitled to £500 per person in cash and another £1500 for each of us to spend on education, business, rent or medical expenses when I got back to China.”

Arrival

Hua returned to China in April 2013. “My parents met me at the airport,” says Hua. “I hadn’t told them about the baby because I didn’t want them to worry about me and when they realised the baby was my son they were shocked. But they were happy and excited. My mum said he was gorgeous.”

“It was difficult to adjust to being back at first because Belfast was very cold and China was so hot for the baby. There are also too many people in China and the quality of the air isn’t good compared to the UK. I felt warm and happy when I arrived though because I was back home and it was good to be united with my family.”

QZC, the Choices Partner in China, has supported Hua since she got back and helped her to get her reintegration money which she has spent on renting an apartment. “They always keep in touch with me by email or phone and ask if they can help me – the service is very good,” says Hua.

Plans and hopes for the future

“In the future I plan to set up an online shop selling clothes because it will be easy to take care of my baby at the same time,” says Hua. “I hope to go back to England at some point and do a Master’s degree in marketing. I also hope that my family will be healthy and happy.”

“My message to other people considering returning to China is that the Choices Service will definitely help you. Choices is a good choice!”

*The client’s name has been changed

[16] Ana and Carlos - Brazil

Life in the UK

Ana and Carlos came to the UK with their son in July 2011 with the intention of working to earn some money. They stayed for a year and three months. As soon as they arrived they wanted to go back to Brazil. "We didn't have any money, we didn't speak the language, and we feared living on the street," says Ana. "We thought it would be easier, but it was a lot harder than we imagined."

The decision to go

"It wasn't hard making the decision to return at all," says Simone. Their intention had been to earn some money so they could live a better life in Brazil, but the fact that they hadn't managed to earn much motivated them even more to return. They also missed friends and family and felt frightened in the UK. Working as a courier, Carlos rode a motorbike and was constantly afraid of being stopped by the police. Friends told them that the Choices service would help them and they found out more about it on the Choices website.

If you want to come back you shouldn't waste any time, you should just go after it. Choices is a really good service, it really works."

Arrival

Carlos and Ana's family were there to meet them when they arrived at the airport. Carlos is joyful when he talks about what it was like to arrive home. "It was the happiest day of my life," he said. In the first week they got together with friends and family and had a barbecue. However, they also found out that Carlos' mother was ill. "It was sweet and sour," he said.

Plans and hopes for the future

With the reintegration money they got from Choices, Carlos and Ana paid their rent. Their son has settled in school now. "It's been hard for him because he missed a whole

year of school while we were in England so he's in a lower year. It's been kind of difficult." However, a particularly happy point since they've been back is the birth of their daughter. "I wanted my daughter to be born here in Brazil," says Simone.

Carlos is currently working as a truck driver but they have bought a coconut water stall from his mother and are working on getting that established. Their hopes for the future are for their children to have a good education and get good jobs so they don't have to go to other countries to earn money.

To other people considering returning to Brazil with Choices Simone has this to say: "If you want to come back you shouldn't waste any time, you should just go after it.

Choices is a really good service, it really works."

Choices local partner

The Choices partner for reintegration assistance in Brazil is Projeto Resgate –

<http://www.projetoresentebrasil.org.br/>

[17] Paulo and Sandra - Brazil

Life in the UK

Paulo's friend suggested he should try working in the UK. He decided to give it a go and stayed for seven years, working in a factory near Belfast. Sandra was also there for seven years, and worked in a call centre. The two of them met at a Brazilian party near Belfast and a few years later they had their baby, Miguel.

The decision to go

"If you're thinking of coming back to your country, contact the guys at Choices. They're great; they will help you out, just as they helped me and my family. It's not to do with deportation so don't be afraid. Just have a chat with them and see what they can do for you."

When Miguel was born and only Paulo was working, it was getting hard to pay the rent and with winter on the way, Paulo was worried that he wouldn't be able to afford heating. They didn't have enough money to return but then they heard about the Choices service. "It was a relief" says Sandra. "It would have taken two or three more years if we'd had to do it on our own."

Preparing to return

"The Choices service is very supportive" says Paulo. "We had a conversation with our case worker over the phone and she talked us through the process and what Choices could do for us. The whole process was fairly quick; it took no longer than 3 months in total. Choices are there to help you whatever you need. You can trust them."

Arrival

"To be honest with you", admits Sandra, "when I first arrived back it wasn't a good feeling. It's a good feeling to be back home with your family but everything is new again and in the first week I actually got homesick for the UK. I was missing our house and friends because we'd built a life there. But now we've got used to it here again."

They spent their first week seeing their families, unpacking and eating Brazilian food. “It’s good to have your family close to you” says Paulo. “They want to please you when you first come back but only in the first week!” Staff from the partner agency, Projeto Resgate also helped Paulo and Sandra identify what they could do with their reintegration money. “They are very kind people, they’ve helped me a lot” says Paulo. “It was good to have someone here in Brazil to support you.”

Plans and hopes for the future

Paulo and Sandra have spent their reintegration money on renting a house, and they also tried to start a business selling clothes. The business didn’t work out so Paulo found a job as a teacher and exchanged the clothes for a motorbike so he could commute to work. It’s not a well-paid job and they are hoping they will soon find something that’s better paid. Sandra plans to go back to studying. “My hopes are to have a good career and enjoy life with my family,” she says. “I want to raise our child in a good environment, in a safe place. Be happy,” says Paulo.

To other people considering returning with Choices Paulo has this to say: “If you’re thinking of coming back to your country, contact the guys at Choices. They’re great; they will help you out, just as they helped me and my family. It’s not to do with deportation so don’t be afraid. Just have a chat with them and see what they can do for you.”

Choices local partner

The Choices partner for reintegration assistance in Brazil is Projeto Resgate –

<http://www.projetoresgatebrasil.org.br>

[18] Jose - Brazil

Life in the UK

Jose came to London in 2002 to join his friend who was working in a restaurant. "My friend told me it was good and I could make money", says Jose. "And in 2002 the exchange rate was very good." Jose got a job doing washing up in the restaurant and his wife joined him three months later. "We thought we'd stay in the UK for no more than two or three years, but we ended up staying for ten. Our son was born there."

The decision to go

"It felt very bad not having documents in the UK and that's why we decided to go back to Brazil" says Jose. "You can't get the best jobs and you just end up doing cleaning work or washing up. Also I worried that I'd be deported and have to leave my wife and baby. It's very scary." Jose also talked to friends in Brazil, who told him that Brazil is better now and there is more opportunity.

His sister had already returned to Brazil with the help of Choices and suggested that Jose could too.

Preparing to return

"Before I came home, a lot of friends also wanted to come back to Brazil. Now I say to them, come home! Because Brazil's good now. You have a lot more opportunity."

At first Jose and his wife worried about whether they could trust the Choices service but as soon as they got in contact, they knew they could. "When we went to the Choices office, they talked to me for nearly an hour and explained everything about going back to Brazil. It was very helpful. They advised us on where we could spend our money and what work options might be best for us. They also told us that we could get support from the Choices partner, Projeto Resgate when we returned to Brazil. Then in four weeks they called us to say they'd arranged the plane tickets. The service is very good, you can really trust them."

Arrival

Jose returned to Brazil with his wife and family in December 2012. When he first arrived he felt both happy to be back and lost at the same time. And he felt hot as well!

"Because we were in England for ten years we got used to it. The English weather, the people, the culture. And believe it or not, what I missed most about England at first was the weather! For me it's too hot in Brazil.

But now we feel happy. Brazil is better than ten years ago. The wages aren't very good but you are in your country. And if you don't like your job you can get another one. It was also very good seeing our family again; we have a big family here In Brazil"

Plans and hopes for the future

"We've spent our reintegration money on rent and also on a course that I'm doing to become a taxi driver," says Jose. "Currently I'm working at a hotel. I sent my CV to them two months ago and I got a job. The fact that we'd lived in the UK and that I speak English helped me a lot. In the future I hope to maybe go to university and for me and my wife to get a good job, and carry on with our lives. I think it's better for my baby son to be brought up here because our family and friends are here."

"Before I came home, a lot of friends also wanted to come back to Brazil. Now I say to them, 'come home!' because Brazil's good now. You have a lot more opportunity."

Choices local partner

The Choices partner for reintegration assistance in Brazil is Projeto Resgate – <http://www.projetoresgatebrasil.org.br/>

Stories of Return - Iraq



English

Mr. B returned to Iraq in July 2008. He had travelled to the UK with the belief that life there could be different and more comfortable, but after receiving a negative answer on his asylum application, he decided to return home. After he had settled and been reunited with his wife and three children, Mr. B decided to join his brother and participate in his business (Aluminium work). Because he had no experience in this field, he decided to use IOM's business training option, to start learning the trade. Mr. B has yet to decide how he will use his remaining assistance but is pleased to be learning new skills which he can use in an already established business. Mr. B also benefited from IOM's temporary accommodation grant as he did not have a place to stay upon his arrival.

العربية Arabic

عاد السيد ب إلى العراق في يوليو / تموز ٢٠٠٨. كان السيد ب قد سافر إلى المملكة المتحدة معتقداً أن الحياة هناك قد تكون مختلفة وأكثر راحة، ولكن بعد رفض طلب اللجوء الذي تقدم به هناك، قرر العودة إلى وطنه الأم. وبعد أن استقر ولم شمله بزوجته وأطفاله الثلاثة، قرر السيد ب أن يشارك أخاه في مشروعه التجاري (أعمال الألمنيوم). ولأنه لا يمتلك أية خبرة في هذا المجال، قرر استعمال خيار التدريب التجاري الذي توفره المنظمة الدولية للهجرة (IOM)، لبدء تعلم أسرار وخبايا هذه المهنة. لم يقرر السيد ب بعد كيف سيستخدم ما تبقى من المساعدة التي قدمت له ولكنه سعيد بتعلمه المهارات الجديدة والتي يمكنه استخدامها في مشروع تجاري قائم. استفاد السيد ب أيضاً من منحة السكن المؤقت التي وفرتها له المنظمة الدولية للهجرة (IOM) لعدم امتلاكه مكاناً يمكنه فيه بمجرد وصوله.

سۆرانی Sorani

کاک ب گهرايهوه بۆ عێراق له مانگی حوزەیرانی ساڵی ٢٠٠٨ دا. ئەو سەفەری کردبوو بۆ بەریتانیا بەو باوەڕە کە ئەوێ ژیاڵێکی جیاوازتر و خۆشتی دەبێت. بەلام ئەگەڵ رەت بوونەوهی داواکاریی پەناوەری ئەو، بریاری دا بگهڕێتەوه بۆ وڵاتەکە. دواى نیشته‌جێ بوون و شادبوونەوهی بە بینینی خێزانەکەى و سێ منداڵەکەى کاک ب بریاری دا ئەگەڵ براکەى بەشداری بکات لە نیش و کارەکەى (کاری ئەلمینیۆم). هەرچەندە هیچ شارەزاییه‌کى نەبوو لەم بواردەدا. ئەو بریاری دا خۆى راھێنانى پیشەیی ریکتراوی نێودەولەتى پەناوەران IOM بەکار بهێنى بۆ فێربوونی نێشه‌کە. کاک ب نێستاش ماویەتى کە چۆن کە ئەو ئەو بەشە ماوه‌ی یارمەتیەکەى وەرگیرێ. هەروەها خۆشحاڵە بە فێربوونی شارەزاییه‌کى نوێ کە دەتوانێ بەکاری بهێنى لە نیش و کارێک کە بنیادنراوه. کاک ب کەلێشى لە خانووبەره‌ی کاتەکى ریکتراوی نێودەولەتى بۆ پەناوەران وەرگیرتووه، چونکە ئە کاتى گه‌رانەوه شوێنێکى نەبوو تیايدا به‌هۆیتەوه.

Appendix 3: IOM and Refugee Action application documents

Appendix 3a: IOM VARRP Declaration of Voluntary Return



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones



REV 01/2011

UK VOLUNTARY ASSISTED RETURN AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME

Declaration of Voluntary Return

FOR IOM STAFF/PARTNERS: Each individual who may be considered/be eligible for IOM voluntary return assistance must be able to understand and consider the content of this form before signing. Please allow the individual to read the form (or ensure it can be translated in a language understood by the applicant) and explain it before asking him/her to sign the voluntary declaration.

I, the undersigned, _____, express
my informed decision to return voluntarily to my home country, which is

_____, through the assistance of IOM.

I understand that the details requested on the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) application form are required by the UK BA in order to assess eligibility to participate in the VARRP. I consent to the UK BA using the information in order to assess whether I am eligible to participate in the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme and in the exercise of functions under the Immigration Acts.

I authorise the IOM and UK Border Agency to share information held on my file that is directly relevant to travel/return and reintegration assistance given under the VARRP for their functions. This information might be shared also with other UK government departments, agencies, local authorities, law enforcement agencies if needed to help those bodies to carry out their functions.

I understand that medical information on my file may be shared with relevant agencies when specific action directly relevant to travel, return and reintegration is necessary due to medical reasons.

I understand that, by returning with IOM's Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme, I will be withdrawing my asylum application in the UK. I also understand that under UK law I may be subject to a re-entry ban to the UK for up to five years.

I understand that IOM will assist me to return home, and I will not be allowed to stop over in any transit country.

I agree for myself as well as for my dependants, heirs and estate that, in the event of personal injury or death during and/or after my participation in the IOM programme, neither IOM, nor any other participating agency or government can in any way be held liable or responsible.

I understand that if I make a false statement in signing this form, the assistance provided by IOM can be terminated at any time.

Signature

Date

Name and Signature of Representative
of IOM or the referring Organization

Date

Appendix 3b. Refugee Action VARRP Declaration of Voluntary Return



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UK VOLUNTARY ASSISTED RETURN AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME

Declaration of Voluntary Return

Family Name: _____ Other Name(s): _____

Country of return: _____ VARRP ref: V _____

I wish to make an application to the Home Office for voluntary return to my home country with the assistance of Choices at Refugee Action (RA). It is my informed decision to return voluntarily to my home country. I understand that the details requested on the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARPP) application form are required by the Home Office. I understand that the Home Office will decide whether I am eligible for VARRP based on the information I provide in my application form.

What will the Home Office do with the information I send?

I agree that the Home Office can use the information I submit in my VARRP application form:

- to assess whether I am eligible to participate in VARRP
- for its other functions under the Immigration Acts
- to share with other UK government departments, UK agencies, UK local authorities and the UK police if necessary.

I authorise the Home Office and Choices to share information held on my file that is directly relevant to travel / return and reintegration assistance given under the VARRP for their functions.

Medical information

I understand that the Home Office and Choices may share medical information on my file with relevant agencies if I need assistance with travel, return or reintegration for medical reasons.

In applying for VARRP

I understand that applying for and/or returning under VARRP:

- I will be required to withdraw any and all outstanding claims or applications I have made to stay in the UK.
- Under UK law I may be subject to a re-entry ban for to the UK for between two and five years.

I understand that Choices will assist me to return home. I understand that I will not be allowed to stop over in any transit country.

Responsibilities

I agree - for myself as well as for my dependants, heirs and estate - that, in the event of personal injury or death during and/or after my participation in the VARRP programme, no participating agency or government can in any way be held liable or responsible.

I understand that if I make a false statement in signing this form, the Home Office may terminate reintegration assistance at any time.

Signed _____ Date _____

Signed by Choices representative / referring organisation

Signed _____ Date _____

VARPP application form

Page 4 of 6

last updated: 30/04/13

Appendix 3c. Refugee Action Legal Consequences of Applying for AVR sheet

Client information



Legal consequences of applying for Choices Assisted Voluntary Return

This briefing tells you what might happen to your legal status in the United Kingdom (UK) if you apply for Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR). It is for asylum seekers and migrants who are thinking of applying for Choices AVR.

Re-entry ban

If you breached UK immigration rules when you were 18 years old or older and return to your home country via Choices you will not usually be able to obtain a visa to enter the UK for two years or five years after your voluntary departure. This is called a 're-entry ban.'

Breaching immigration rules

In the UK, you have breached immigration rules if:

- you overstayed your visa; or
- you breached a condition of your leave (e.g. you did not sign at a reporting centre for a prolonged period); or
- you entered the country illegally (i.e. you did not claim asylum immediately on arrival); or
- you used deception to gain (or attempt to gain) entry into the UK.

Will you get a two year or five year re-entry ban?

If you return to your home country within six months (i.e. six months or less) of the date on which your removal notice was issued, you will only get a two year ban. If you return after six months, you will get a five year ban. You would normally receive a removal notice once your asylum claim and any appeals come to an end or, if you do not claim asylum, sometime after the UK Border Agency (UKBA) realise that you are in the UK without permission from the government.

When will you not get a re-entry ban?

You will not get a re-entry ban if:

- you have never breached immigration rules; or
- you were under 18 when you breached immigration rules and have not breached immigration rules since turning 18; or
- you were accepted by UKBA as a victim of trafficking.

Also, a re-entry ban will not prevent you from applying to re-enter the UK as any of the following:

- a spouse, civil partner, unmarried or same-sex partner of someone present and settled in the UK

Registered Charity number 283660
Company Registration number 1593454
OISC Authorisation Number N200100071



- a spouse, civil partner, unmarried or same-sex partner of a refugee or person with Indefinite Leave to Remain or other leave to remain in the UK
- a fiancé(e) or proposed civil partner of someone present and settled in the UK
- a parent, grandparent or other dependent relative of someone present and settled in the UK
- a person exercising rights of access to a child who is resident in the UK

Re-entry bans for people who do not return with Choices

- If you only breached immigration rules by over-staying by 90 days or less and leave voluntarily and at your own expense you will not get a re-entry ban.
- If you leave voluntarily and at your own expense you will get a one year re-entry ban.
- If you are forcibly removed from the UK, deported from the UK or convicted of entry into the UK by deception you will get a 10 year re-entry ban. If deported, you will continue to be prevented from re-entering the UK as long as your deportation order remains in force.

Other refusals of visa applications

Even if you do not get a re-entry ban, that does not mean that UKBA will grant you a visa to come back to the United Kingdom. You may, in future, be refused a visa for many reasons that have nothing to do with re-entry bans or voluntary return.

Withdrawal of asylum and other claims

If you leave the UK, you will be withdrawing any asylum claim you still have outstanding and abandoning any outstanding asylum appeals*

If you return to your home country with Choices you will also be asked to sign a form at the airport:

- If you have claimed asylum, the form will say that you are withdrawing your asylum claim and abandoning any outstanding appeals*
- If you have not claimed asylum, the form will say that you are withdrawing any and all outstanding claims to stay in the UK*

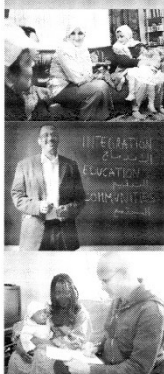
* This does not include any applications to the European Court of Human Rights.

Effect on current or future application for protection

If you apply to return voluntarily to your home country, it may become more difficult for you to argue that you currently fear persecution there.

Please ask your Choices AVR caseworker to explain anything that you do not understand.

For more information, see www.choices-avr.org.uk



Appendix 3d: Refugee Action Caseworker Declaration

Casework tools



RA Caseworker Declaration

This document **MUST** be signed by a Choices caseworker before submitting an AVR application to UKBA.

It is to confirm that you have explained what happens if they decide to apply for voluntary return. In other words, it ensures they have made an informed decision about voluntary return.

Refugee Action Caseworker Declaration

I have explained the application form and the declaration of voluntary return to the applicant(s) in a language they understand. I have explained what happens after they apply. The applicant(s) has/have confirmed that:

- he/she/they would like Refugee Action to assist them in applying for AVR and
- he/she/they understand the implications of applying on:
 - Their current claim for protection (that it will be treated as withdrawn)
 - Any future protection claim in the UK (that their voluntary return application may be taken into consideration for example by a judge if they make a future claim for protection in the UK)
 - Their ability to return to the UK for up to 5 years (re-entry ban)

I have checked that their ID (if any) matches the name on their AVR form.

Caseworker name: Signature:

RA office: Date:/...../.....

RA CASEWORKERS - THESE DECLARATIONS MUST BE SIGNED BEFORE WE SUBMIT AN AVR APPLICATION

Please ensure that where the caseworker is not OISC 2 registered, this document is counter-signed by an OISC 2 registered caseworker

Refugee Action Head Office:
Victoria Charity Centre
11 Belgrave Road
London SE1V 1RB
Tel: 020 7952 1510
www.refugee-action.org.uk

Registered Charity number 283660
Company Registration number 1503454

RA declaration last updated 01/07/11




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Language: English

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Appendix 3e: Client information: Choices VARRP programme

Client information



working with refugees to build new lives

*Choices - *VARRP Programme

Help with the journey & to build a new life

If you are considering returning to your country and you are:

- An asylum seeker
- A refused asylum seeker or
- Someone with temporary leave to remain (Discretionary Leave)

you may be entitled to support and assistance under the *Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP).

***VARRP**

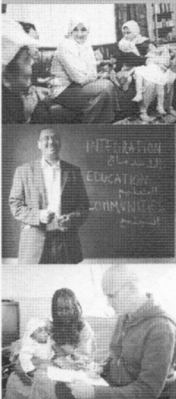
***VARRP will help you with:**

- Travel documentation
- Arranging a flight to your country of return
- Assistance at the airport in the UK
- You may be able to access help at the airport you return to
- Onward transport from the airport, to your final destination
- You could receive up to £1500 to help you settle back in your country.

Help and money to build a new life




Before you travel, your *Choices caseworker will help you plan how you want to build a new life once you have returned home. As part of this you will agree with your *Choices caseworker how you will use up to £1500 to help make this happen. This is called your **Reintegration Support'. This may be used for:

- Excess baggage and immediate needs on arrival
- Training and Education
- Help setting up a business including buying equipment and materials
- Travel to find employment
- Housing
- Medical needs
- Mentoring opportunities



Refugee Action Head Office: The Old Fire Station, 150 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8SB.
Tel 0207 654 7700
www.refugee-action.org.uk

Registered Charity number 283660
Company Registration number 1593454
OISC Authorisation Number N200100071



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VARRP Client Information

Last updated: 13-03-11

Language: English

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Planning for your return

Your *Choices caseworker will help you think about the steps you would like to take to settle in after you return.

For example they can help you:

- Contact friends and family in your country before you leave
- Find out about the situation in your country
- Plan how you will get back from the airport to your final destination
- Consider where you will stay when you return
- Find out about healthcare and education near where you will be living
- Think about what you will do once you return - education, training, business opportunities, settling in to your community, health issues and many other areas
- Contact local organisations who may be able to give you help and advice once you arrive.

Support After you Leave the UK

Your caseworker will also discuss how and when to contact you after you have returned, to see how things are getting on, and to review your plans if necessary.

This contact is so that:

- We can ask you how your journey was
- We can ask you how things are going for you now you have returned
- We can ask you whether there was any information you wished we had given you before you left, so that we can improve our service for other people
- You can tell us how you would like to spend your reintegration money.

Financial Support

The financial support is given to you by Refugee Action. This money is given to you in different ways:

- A *'Start Card' containing the first £500 is given to you at the airport as you leave. This is for anything you need immediately after you arrive. You can use the *'Start Card' to withdraw the £500 from a bank machine in the country you return to.
- The rest is usually accessed through partner organisations in the country of return, who will use it to give you support and assistance after you return. However, if this is not possible:
- You can contact us to tell us how you would like to use this money. *UKBA only allow us to make payments to you (via the *Start Card) if you send us evidence to prove how it will be spent. Only certain evidence is accepted - please see the additional **'Reintegration evidence' sheet for more information.
- You must spend all your reintegration assistance within 6 months of the date you leave otherwise you will lose the money.

Please ask your caseworker for more information

**If you have not yet been in contact with us please call us on:
0808 800 0007**

*These words are English names of organisations or other words that cannot be translated. Please ask an advice worker to explain what they mean



Appendix 4: IOM and Refugee Action AVR information available in different languages

Appendix 4a: IOM

AVR information materials available in the following languages:

At the close of the AVR programmes in April 2012, IOM were producing the following translated documents:

	Small Leaflet	Stories of Return	AVR poster A4*	MM poster **	VARRP FAQ	Re-integration poster	Re-integration how to access poster	Website	AVR card leaflet	AVRIM posters	AVRIM FAQs	Info Pack	News letter	Matrix
Albanian	X	X			X				X		X			
Amharic	X	X			X				X		X			
Arabic	X	X	X		X				X		X			
Armenian	X	X			X				X		X			
Bengali	X	X			X				X		X			
Chinese	X	X			X				X		X			
Dari	X	X			X				X		X			
English	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Farsi	X	X			X				X		X			
French	X	X			X				X		X			
Gujarati	X	X	X		X				X		X			
Hindi	X	X	X		X				X		X			
Lingala	X	X	X		X				X		X			
Malay	X	X			X				X		X			
Moldovan/ Romanian	X	X			X				X		X			

Mongolian	X	X			X				X		X			
Ndebele	X	X			X				X		X			
Nepalese	X	X			X				X		X			
Pashto	X	X			X				X		X			
Portuguese	X	X			X				X		X			
Punjabi (Indian)	X	X	X		X				X		X			
Punjabi (Pakistani)	X	X	X		X				X		X			
Russian	X	X			X				X		X			
Shona	X	X			X				X		X			
Sinhalese	X	X			X				X		X			
Somali	X	X			X				X		X			
“Sorani”	X	X			X				X		X			
Spanish	X	X	X		X				X		X			
Swahili	X	X	X		X				X		X			
Tamil	X	X			X				X		X			
Thai	X	X			X				X		X			
Tigrinya	X	X			X				X		X			
Turkish	X	X			X				X		X			
Urdu	X	X	X		X				X		X			
Vietnamese	X	X	X		X				X		X			

*IOM Can help you return home poster (sizes A4, A3 and A2 in English)

** Managing migration for the benefit of all poster (sizes A4, A3 and A2 in English)

DVDs:

	Intro DVD (1)	Intro DVD (2)	<i>Stories of Return</i> + further 5 unnamed languages
1. Albanian	X		X
2. Amharic		X	
3. Arabic	X		
4. Armenian			
5. Bengali		X	
6. Chinese		X	
7. Dari			
8. English	X	X	X
9. Farsi	X		
10. French	X		
11. Gujarati			
12. Hindi			
13. "Kurdish"	X		
14. Lingala			
15. Malay			
16. Moldovan/ 17. Romanian			
18. Mongolian			
19. Ndebele			
20. Nepalese			
21. Pashto	X		
22. Portuguese	X		
23. Punjabi (Indian)			

24. Punjabi (Pakistani)			
25. Russian	X		
26. Shona			
27. Sinhalese			
28. Somali	X		
29. Spanish	X		
30. Swahili		X	
31. Tamil	X		
32. Thai			
33. Tigrinya	X		
34. Turkish	X		
35. Urdu	X		
36. Vietnamese		X	

- The Jamaican Stories of Return booklet is written in English and ‘Jamaican’.
- Business Guide booklet, only available in English.

[Reference: IOM Information Pack: ‘IOM UK Information Materials – Order List’. No date of publication provided. Approx. 2007].

Appendix 4b: Refugee Action

Refugee Action AVR information resources are available on their website in the following languages:

	Small Leaflet	Stories of Return	(New) poster	Website (includes FAQ)	Credit card leaflet	AVRIM cards & posters	DVD	Newsletter
Albanian	X			X				
Arabic	X		X	X			X	
Bengali	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Dari	X			X			X	
English	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Farsi	X			X			X	
French	X			X			X	
Hindi	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Kurdish Sorani	X	X	X	X			X	
Mandarin	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Pashtu	X		X	X			X	
Portuguese	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Punjabi	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Russian	X	X		X			X	
Spanish	X		X	X		X	X	
Tagalog						X		
Tamil	X	X	X	X			X	
Ukrainian						X		
Urdu	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Vietnamese	X	X		X				

Ref: <http://www.choices-avr.org.uk/resources> [Accessed 6/11/14]

Appendix 5: Ethics documentation

Appendix 5a: Ethical protocol, as submitted to ENCAP Ethics Committee

Application for ethical approval from ENCAP Research Ethics Committee

A OVERVIEW

1. Title of project:

A critical discourse analysis of Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) in the UK.

2. Name of researcher:

Katy Brickley, Centre for Language and Communication Research.
brickleykl@cardiff.ac.uk

3. Background summary, aims and objectives:

NOTE: Until 31st March 2011, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) ran Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes in the UK. On 1st April 2011, Refugee Action took over as the service-provider for AVR programmes in the UK. Since beginning to collect data with Refugee Action in September 2011, the organisation has revised its work structure, which has affected my research plan. As such I am re-submitting this ethical protocol for approval following further small changes to my methodology. Please note, some interviews with IOM and Refugee Action staff members have already been carried out.

AVR programmes are used throughout the world to assist failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants to return to their countries of origin with resettlement packages. These packages may include assistance with travel costs and documents and funding to cover temporary housing, medical support, business start-up costs or course fees.

There is a clear need to understand how applicants access AVR schemes and information about return. By exploring and analysing the textual and interactive processes within AVR this project aims to:

- explore how clients' access AVR in UK
- explore attitudes to return and reintegration assistance
- highlight discursive practice that maximises opportunities for clients to prepare for return.

4. Research design/methods

The research will take an ethnographic approach to discourse analysis by examining how information about AVR is produced and received. Data will be

collected in the following ways: observations at IOM and Refugee Action offices; semi-structured interviews with Refugee Action clients; interviews with IOM and Refugee Action staff; collection of IOM and Refugee Action AVR literature. Ethnographic observation and interview data will complement the main focus on client interviews and AVR literature.

Participant observation work will be carried out at IOM and Refugee Action offices.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews with staff: These interviews will reinforce my understanding of the advisory process and will assist in analysing institutional texts. The aim will be to understand how clients are prepared for their return and reintegration. Interviews with IOM and some Refugee Action staff have already taken place.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews with clients: Participants will be recruited via Refugee Action's caseworkers, as well as via refugee community organisations. Only people already considering return will be asked to participate.

AVR documents: close textual analysis will be undertaken of key AVR documents and promotional literature. These will be mainly public information documents and will not require anonymisation. If clients are happy to share completed application and reintegration planning forms, all research copies will be anonymised for any identifying information.

5. Expected project outputs/feedback:

This project hopes to establish how applicants prepare for return. Project findings will be shared by feeding back information to individual participants (should they want it) as well as staff at IOM UK and Refugee Action. Research findings will also be disseminated academically via university networks and in the final PhD thesis.

6. Summary of ethical considerations (consider in brief, possible harms to your participants. You should then explain how you will protect the participants in view of these special issues in Section B below):

There are three types of participants affected by this study: a) IOM and Refugee Action staff b) IOM and Refugee Action clients in general and c) IOM and Refugee Action clients and potential clients who have elected to participate in the project.

a) IOM/Refugee Action staff:

IOM and Refugee Action staff will be involved in the study in various ways. Some staff will be involved during the observation stage and will be introduced to the research via email and/or individually in person. Particular staff members will be asked to be interviewed and shadowed more closely. There are several concerns regarding data collection at IOM and Refugee Action offices:

- staff may feel obliged to take part in the research due to their loyalty to the organisation
- in the research report/s, staff will be easily identifiable due to their job role and specialism
- it will be obvious to office workers and visitors which staff members are participating in the research
- IOM and Refugee Action have both hosted various researchers which may result in research fatigue.

b) IOM and Refugee Action clients in general:

It is possible that IOM and Refugee Action client information will be seen in passing during interviews and ethnographic observation (e.g. files on desks, etc). This information will not be noted (on paper or audio format) and information will not be shared.

c) Participating IOM and Refugee Action clients and potential clients:

Due to the potentially vulnerable position of clients and the possibility of working with clients' children, it is essential that I provide an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check. It is important that clients do not feel obliged to participate, that they fully understand what the research is about, and that they understand that the results of the research will not have any effect on their individual return process.

It is possible that discussing return may upset participants and as such the research needs to be responsive to the emotional aspects of return and the asylum process as a whole.

B COMMON ETHICAL ISSUES

It is generally accepted that research participants should be afforded various guarantees and opportunities. These are embedded in the questions below and we ask you to explain your response to each:

Participants

1. How will the research be communicated to participants?

IOM and Refugee Action staff:

IOM and Refugee Action staff will be requested to participate in the research in person, by email or phone. They will receive an individual verbal explanation of the research project and a *Participant Information Leaflet* summarising the research which includes a consent form (see appendix 2).

Refugee Action clients:

Refugee Action staff will introduce the research to clients using a short script during one of their meetings/phone calls with their client and will offer a *Participant Information Leaflet* summarising the research which includes a consent form (see appendix 3). If the client is happy to participate and agrees to be contacted, I will give an individual verbal explanation of the research project

by phone. I will ask if I can shadow them through the return process and will request a one-to-one interview with the client.

For client participants, time will be allocated to explaining the research project, with an interpreter if deemed necessary; stating that the research does not aim to affect their individual return and reintegration; that the research aims to assist in how people return in the future. It will be stressed that if they do decide to withdraw their participation, that this will not affect their application to return in any way. It will be explained that I hope to discuss the research findings with them and gain their feedback.

All participants:

For all participants, the following issues will be summarised in the relevant *Participant Information Leaflet* and discussed in the briefing:

- identification of researcher and sponsoring institution
- outline of purpose of the research
- outline of benefits to participants
- anticipated duration of interviews
- anticipated length of time spent shadowing
- confirmation that the research will be informed by all participants' concerns
- confirmation that they do not have to take part
- confirmation that they can cancel at any stage (and how to go about this)
- confirmation that any information provided or individual comment can be 'struck from the record' on request
- confirmation that data will be confidential and anonymised
- contact details should participants have any questions
- **for staff:** confirmation that if they do cancel, this will not affect their job
- **for clients:** confirmation that their application to return will be unaffected irrespective of decision/refusal to participate or decision to withdraw after agreement to participate.

There are **three** versions of the *Participant Information Leaflet*, one for staff, one for interpreters and one for clients. Copies are found in appendices 2, 3 and 4.

**2. How will consent to participation be gained from participants?
(Please attach a copy of any written consent form you plan to use)**

Anyone willing to take part in the research will be required to sign a consent form. This is attached to the relevant *Participant Information Leaflet* which will outline the details of the research project. The consent form will be signed after the participant has had time to consider their involvement and has had the opportunity to discuss any queries they have with the researcher. Please see appendices 2, 3 and 4 for copies of the *Participant Information Leaflets*.

3. How much time will be allowed for participants to consider and consult others before giving consent?

IOM and Refugee Action staff:

IOM/Refugee Action staff members will have approximately a week to consider their participation.

Refugee Action clients:

Refugee Action clients will have approximately at 2-5 days to consider their involvement.

4. How will you try to guarantee that participation is voluntary?

Extra effort will be spent to make sure participating clients and caseworkers are happy with their involvement in the project given the possibility that staff and clients may feel obliged to participate. This will be addressed with potential participants during the explanation of the research.

To ensure that clients fully understand the details of the research, the option of an interpreter will be offered to address any concerns that clients may have with the research. This will ensure that clients who have poorer English language skills do not feel obliged to take part, or take part without fully understanding the project.

5. Will participants be informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time?

How will participants withdraw from the research if they decide that they wish to do so?

All participants will be informed verbally that they do not have to participate, that they can withdraw from the research at any stage and that they do not have to give a reason if they decide to do so. They will be assured that the research is unconnected to their AVR application or their position (staff). However, once the research has been published or disseminated, they would be unable to withdraw. This will be addressed in the verbal briefing and leaflet.

Each *Participation Information Leaflet* contains the contact details of the researcher so that participants can contact the researcher should they want to withdraw participation.

6. What provisions will you make for participants to contact the researcher with any questions or comments?

Each *Participation Information Leaflet* contains the contact details of the researcher. Participants will be informed that they are able to contact the researcher at any point with queries, comments or concerns about the research.

C Data Processing and Storage

1. Will the data be anonymised? If not, why not? OR If so, how?

Interview and shadowing data will be anonymised upon transcription/write-up. Anonymisation will include anything that might identify the participants, such as job title, tasks, gender, nationality, and other details. Participants will also be made aware that they have a right to request particular identifying features are deleted from the data. As discussed earlier, complete anonymisation may not be possible as it is likely that – in this office environment – staff will be aware of those participating in the research. Participants will be made aware of this.

Ethnographic field-notes will be anonymised in the same manner as the interviews.

2. Will confidentiality be maintained? If no, why not? OR If so, how?

Confidentiality will be maintained as a result of the researcher and both supervisors observing relevant ethical codes of social science research and relevant legislation, particularly the Data Protection Act. Cardiff University's requirements regarding confidentiality will be adhered to; as such, the Cardiff University confidentiality agreement will be signed by the researcher (a copy is attached in Appendix 1).

IOM and Refugee Action may request that I sign a confidentiality agreement and/or disclaimer that they have drawn up themselves.

3. How will the data be stored?

Names and contact information will be kept separate from the main interview data and will be deleted from files post-transcription. Any hard-copy recordings, signed consent forms, transcripts and field notes will be stored in a lockable filing cabinet at the researcher's address. Once in electronic form, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer disconnected from the internet. All pre-anonymised data will be accessed by the researcher alone.

All confidential data will be kept by the researcher for five years from the date of collection.

4. Who will have access to the data? (Initially and through the life of the project).

The project will be conducted under the advice of two supervisors who will have only limited access to the data. Access to data therefore will be restricted to the researcher and supervisors directly involved with the project. Transcribed data, however, will be anonymised from initial collection.

Signature: Katy Brickley

Date: 22-02-13

Guidance from the Ethics Committee on recommended amendments to any of the above procedures is gratefully received.

Appendix 5b: Cardiff University confidentiality agreement for students

Appendix 1: Cardiff University confidentiality agreement for students

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT – STUDENT

1. I hereby undertake not, during the term of this project, or after its termination, for any reason unless expressly authorised by Cardiff University ('the University'), or required by law, to disclose to any unauthorized person, nor use, any confidential information relating to or received from the University, its staff, students and other parties.
2. Such information includes but is not limited to financial information, information held on staff or student personal files and research data. Information is also confidential information if it is clearly marked as such or by its very nature is evidently confidential.
3. I understand that the use and disclosure of all information about identifiable living individuals is governed by the Data Protection Act. I will not use any personal data I acquire during my work for any purpose that is or may be incompatible with the purposes specified in this agreement.
4. I understand that I am required to keep all confidential and personal data securely.
5. I hereby undertake to ensure that all records provided or created for the purposes of this agreement, including any back-up records, are passed back to the University contact or deleted as directed, once I have received confirmation that the work I was employed to do has been satisfactorily completed and all the required information has been provided in accordance with the University's wishes.
6. I understand that the University reserves the right to take legal action against any breach of confidence.

Signed: Katy Brickley

Name: Katy Brickley

Address: 24 Waterloo, Frome, Somerset BA11 3JB.

Date: 20/02/13

- One copy to be retained by University (issuing School or Admin Dept) for 7 years following completion of the work
- One copy to be retained by the person undertaking the work.

Appendix 5c: Participant information leaflet for IOM



Research on access to Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes

- *information and consent form*

About this project:

I am a PhD student at Cardiff University and I am researching how service-users access IOM Assisted Voluntary Return programmes and prepare for return. I hope this will help IOM with its work in the future.

This leaflet will give you further information about my research to help you decide whether to take part...

What is this research for?

This project will explore how failed asylum seekers access and use information about AVR to prepare for their return.

As a key person in the AVR process, I want to find out your views on AVR, explore issues in AVR advice work, and understand how service-users access the AVR programme to prepare for return. With your input, I hope that this research will help failed asylum seekers considering return in the future.

What will happen if you agree to take part:

If you agree to take part in this research I will tape record an interview with you.

Later I will transcribe the recordings and analyse the transcripts – the analysis will be included in my final report. You will **not** be identified in the transcripts. For example, if you say your name during the session, I will change it to a different name in the transcript. I will store the recordings and transcripts securely.

I hope that you will help with my research. Of course, you do not have to take part in this project. You can also withdraw at any stage from the research project.

If you are willing to take part in this research, please complete the form opposite.

If you have **any** questions or comments about this research project, please feel free to contact me:

- Katy Brickley
- Centre for Language and Communication
- ENCAP, Humanities Building, Colum Drive, Cardiff CF10 3EU Wales
- Brickleykl@cardiff.ac.uk
- 07867 771701

Consent Form

If you are willing to take part, please fill in the form below.

Keep the other part of the leaflet in case you have any questions later.

I (*your name in capitals*):

agree to be tape-recorded and interviewed for research purposes.

- I understand that my participation in this project is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time during the research project.
- I have read and understood the attached information.
- I understand that if I have any questions about this project I can contact Katy Brickley at Cardiff University. I have a copy of her contact details.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 5d: Participant leaflet for Refugee Action

Research on access to Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes: *Information and consent form*



About this project

I am a researcher at Cardiff University and I am exploring how clients access Refugee Action's Assisted Voluntary Return programmes and the opportunities they have to prepare for return. I hope my research will help everyone involved in the AVR process, staff and clients alike.

You are a key person in the AVR process, so I want to find out your views on AVR programmes, explore issues in AVR advice work, and understand how you use AVR information with clients before they return.

This leaflet will give you further information about my research to help you decide whether to take part...

What will happen if you agree to take part?

If you agree to take part in this research I will record an interview with you. The interview will take around 30-45 minutes and be at a time and place convenient for you.

Later I will then transcribe the recording and analyse the transcript – the analysis and sections of the transcript will be included in my final research. You will not be identified in the transcript in any way. For example, if you say your name during the session, I will change it to a different name in the transcript. If you change your mind about something you said, you can ask for sections of the interview to be discarded.

All audio recordings and personal data will be kept confidentially and securely.

I hope that you will help with my research. Of course, you do not have to take part in this project. You can also withdraw at any stage from the research project, until it is published. You can do this by contacting me; you do not have to give a reason why you wish to withdraw.

If you have any questions or comments about this research project, please feel free to contact me:

Katy Brickley
Centre for Language and Communication

ENCAP, Humanities Building, Colum Drive, Cardiff CF10 3EU. Wales
Brickleykl@cardiff.ac.uk 07791 071850

If you are happy to take part in this research, please complete the form below.

Consent Form

If you are happy to take part, please fill in the form below and return it to Katy Brickley by email (see address on first page). Keep the first page of this leaflet in case you have any questions later.

I (*your name in capitals*):

--

agree to be interviewed and tape-recorded for research purposes.

- I understand that my participation in this project is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time during the research project, until the research is published.
- I have read and understood the attached information.
- I understand that if I have any questions about this project I can contact Katy Brickley at Cardiff University. I have a copy of her contact details.

Signed: (typed if sending by email)	
Date:	
Phone number:	
Email address:	

Thank you.

Appendix 6: Interview documentation

Appendix 6a: Questions for IOM caseworkers

A About you:

1. Tell me about how you got into this work/sector...

- Where were you working before?
- What made you want to work for IOM?
- Did you know about AVR before you applied to work here?
- How long have you worked for IOM/in your current role?
- What are the most important characteristics of someone doing your job?

B Working environment:

2. What do you most enjoy about your role?

- What do you find difficult/frustrating?

3. Take me through your average day.

- What do you spend most of your time doing?
- What are the strengths of your working environment/workplace?
- What are the challenges of working in this sector?

4. Within IOM, have you ever worked in another team or do casework for another country of origin?

- Tell me about it...any differences?
- Do you have any responsibilities other than casework? Research? Development? Medical cases?

C Application to return:

5. Thinking about your specialist country of origin, briefly take me through the process of how a client applies to return.

- Have you ever had to refuse an application?
- How do you/clients feel if they cancel?
- Do clients talk to you about their reason for returning or their asylum application?

6. How does this process change when clients come via referral agencies?

- How do you find working with these agencies/groups?
- What impact do these referral agencies have on clients' preparedness?

7. In your opinion, to what extent have clients prepared for return before they contact IOM?

- What advice do they receive? Legal/social/security?
- Where from?

8. What do you think clients' expectations are of IOM and AVR process?

- Is there anything that seems to surprise clients about the process?

9. Are there any common misunderstandings about the return process?

- If so, tell me about this.
- How do you deal with this; how can this be countered?

D Reintegration assistance:

10. Again, thinking about your specialist country of return (e.g. Zimbabwe/Sri Lanka), take me through how a client would ideally plan their reintegration assistance.

- When is reintegration assistance first introduced/discussed?
- How do you decide to approve/reject an idea?
- What guidance do you try to give?
- What are the challenges in giving this advice?
- What aspect of return do clients focus on most?
- Do clients often change their mind about how they use it (once returned?)

11. Take me through which IOM publications/resources you use with clients.

- What information tools do you find most useful and why? (AVR leaflet; bespoke country info; phone call to returnee; business toolkit; business booklet; other?)
- Do you think clients also research/plan their return independently?

12. Can you give me an example of a particularly successful reintegration for one of your clients?

- What factors do you think contributed to its success?

13. In your experience, what are the biggest obstacles for clients planning their return?

- Perhaps a particular area of reintegration: housing/business/health?
- Do clients anticipate these problems?
- How do you/they deal with these problems?

14. Is there anything that surprises you about how clients use their reintegration assistance?

- Do clients always use all of the reintegration assistance on offer?
- If not, why not?

E Families:

15. How does working with families differ (if at all) to working with individual clients?

- In what way?

16. How much is the decision to return a joint family decision?

- Or made by one or other of the parents?
- How much are the children involved in (or influence) the decision?

F Lastly:

17. Is there anything that we didn't cover that you would like to talk about?

18. In your experience, what three things in the AVR programmes work really well?

19. And if you could change three things about the AVR process as a whole, what would they be?

Thank you!

Appendix 6b: Interview guide for Refugee Action caseworkers

A About you:

20. Tell me about how you got into this work/sector...
- Where were you working before you started as an AVR caseworker?

B Working environment:

21. Describe briefly your role as caseworker.
22. What do you most enjoy about your role?
- What are the strengths of your working environment/workplace?
 - Which countries do you work on? Do they differ in workload at all?
 - Is there anything you find difficult or frustrating about the role/sector?

C Application to return:

23. Briefly take me through (your view of) the process of how a client applies to return...
- Do you ever need to refuse an application?
 - Do you find that clients talk to you about their reason for returning or their asylum application?
 - How do you find working with referral agencies/groups?
 - What impact do these referral agencies have on clients' preparation for return?
24. What do you think clients' expectations are of Refugee Action and the AVR process?
- Is there anything that seems to surprise clients about the process?
 - Are there any common misunderstandings about the return process?
 - How do you deal with this?

D Reintegration assistance:

25. Take me through how a client would ideally plan their reintegration:
- When is reintegration assistance first discussed?
 - How do you decide to approve/reject an idea?
 - Are there any challenges in advising about reintegration assistance?
 - What aspect of the return process do clients focus on most?
26. Are there any Refugee Action information resources that you particularly like to use with clients? Why?
27. Do you find that clients also research/plan their return independently?
28. Can you give me an example of a particularly successful reintegration for one of your clients?
29. In your experience, what are the biggest obstacles for clients planning their return?
- Do clients anticipate these problems?
 - How do you/they deal with these problems?
30. Is there anything that surprises you about how clients use their reintegration assistance?
- Do clients always use all of the reintegration assistance on offer?

E Lastly:

31. In your experience, what three things in the AVR programmes work really well?
32. And if you could change three things about the AVR process as a whole, what would they be?
33. Is there anything that we didn't cover that you would like to talk about?

Thank you!

Appendix 6c: IOM and Refugee Action caseworker interview transcripts

[For examiners only: please see separate document]

Transcription key:

K	interviewer
A	interviewee
[[simultaneous speech
[overlapping speech
=	contiguous speech
-	short untimed pause
((pause))	untimed interval between utterances
(vocalization)	non-verbal or para-linguistic information, speaker coughs, laughs, and other contextual information.
(())	indecipherable data or best approximation
[]	anonymised data
[K:]	back-channelling
:	extension of sound or syllable it follows
?	indicates a rising inflection
<u>main</u>	emphasis
' '	represented discourse
trunc-	truncated speech

Adapted from Atkinson, J. and Heritage, J. (2006) 'Jefferson's transcript notation.' in Jaworski, A. and Coupland, N., eds., *The Discourse Reader*, 2nd ed., London: Routledge.

Appendix 7: AVR in the media

Appendix 7a: Refugee Action: the future of AVR (briefing paper)

The future of Assisted Voluntary Return

Refugee Action's Choices service is coming to an end and Assisted Voluntary Returns (AVR) are changing. This briefing explains what is changing, what the implications are and how you can feed back your views on the changes.

What is AVR?

AVR programmes enable specific groups of people in the UK to voluntarily return to their countries with assistance to help them to reintegrate. There are three separate programmes – one for irregular migrants, another for people who have sought asylum and a third for families.

Since 2011, Refugee Action has received funding from the Home Office and European Commission to deliver AVR programmes through its Choices service. People can contact Choices and receive free impartial, independent and confidential advice about their options.

No information is shared with the Home Office unless the client explicitly consents and the advice provided is completely non-directive – seeking to empower people to meaningfully make decisions about their lives rather than persuade them to take one option rather than another.

Choices promotes this service via standard accessible marketing techniques tailored to different nationalities such as adverts in community media, a translated website and a dedicated team of outreach workers who engage with communities, including with those who may be hidden from mainstream services.

If somebody decides to return via an AVR programme, they receive help with obtaining travel documents and flights. The cost of transport to their destination is paid. They receive help planning how they will reintegrate. Eligible groups such as asylum seekers, families and vulnerable people receive financial support and reintegration assistance from NGOs in 18 of the most commonly returned to countries. Reintegration support can help for example with accessing accommodation, training, setting up a business or receiving healthcare.

The principles that underpin the Choices service are that it is independent from government, confidential, that it values the trust of its clients, that it is client centred – impartially helping people to make choices and that it seeks to help people achieve meaningfully sustainable outcomes.

Refugee Action believes everyone seeking sanctuary in the UK should be able to live, not just survive. So we make sure people can find the basic support they need and have the chance to rebuild their lives.

Head office: Victoria Charity Centre 11 Belgrave Road London SW1V 1RB. Tel: 020 7952 1511.

What is changing?

The current funding for the Choices service is due to cease on the 31st December 2015. The Home Office has announced that rather than extending the funding or tendering for a new AVR service, from the 1 January 2016, the Home Office is instead planning to directly deliver a service by itself. The details of the new service are currently unclear but the Home Office has said that:

- The service will be delivered directly by the Home Office rather than an independent organisation. Refugee Action's involvement in delivering AVR through the Choices service will end. We will provide clearer details of the timeframe for different elements of service closure later on in the year.
- The service will not include any funded impartial, pre-decision advice to help people choose between their options. It will aim to return only people who have already made the decision to return rather than those who are unsure.
- In the current programme non-vulnerable irregular migrants are eligible for AVR. They are not eligible for financial assistance with reintegrating but they do receive help and support with making their decision, advice on planning their reintegration and the cost of transport from where they are in the UK to their destination within the country of return. Whereas families and people who have sought (but not been granted) asylum will be eligible for the new scheme, irregular migrants who do not meet a Home Office definition of vulnerability will not be eligible for the scheme.
- At least initially, it is unlikely people will receive post-return support apart from cash payments. The Home Office has said it intends to include a mix of cash and 'in kind' support over time with referral to in-country assistance in some countries but this is unlikely to be available at least earlier on.

What are the implications of this on people considering voluntary return?

- People who are uncertain whether to return or not will no longer have a source of funded, impartial advice to help them with their decision making. Possible consequences of the lack of such advice are that people may:
 - Remain in the UK – quite possibly facing very difficult circumstances such as destitution and being at risk of exploitation
 - Return to their country without having fully thought through the decision. This could include having not explored how they might build a sustainable future or manage risks they might face upon return.
- Irregular migrants who cannot evidence that they are vulnerable will no longer be able to return through an AVR programme.
- People who return with cash support but without broader reintegration support are more likely to use their reintegration assistance to cover immediate needs

(such as giving it away to family members) rather than considering longer-term more sustainable uses of the money. Additionally, the lack of support from organisations in-country and the provision of cash can also lead to increased vulnerability, increasingly the risks of exploitation or theft. People will be less able to achieve sustainable returns. They are more likely to become internally displaced or remigrate, they are more likely to face security threats or persecution and they are less likely to be able to generate an income, access suitable housing, subsistence, healthcare or education.

What are the implications for Local Authorities?

As there will be no funded service seeking to engage with and provide impartial advice about voluntary return, many people will not hear about it. It is likely that fewer people without recourse to public funds will depart the UK.

Local Authorities are likely to see the impact of a rise in the number of destitute people in their areas. They may see a rise in the number of families they are required to support under section 17 of the Children's Act 1989.

In the current service, Refugee Action commissions in-country assessments to establish if return is in the best interests of children. Local Authorities may become obliged to commission in-country assessments directly in cases containing children.

What are the implications for the taxpayer?

According to our calculations, the Home Office plans are likely to cost the taxpayer millions of pounds. Read our letter to the Immigration Minister for more details.

What are the implications for charities?

Charities who encounter people who are undecided about whether to return will no longer have a confidential, impartial service to which to refer them for advice and support with exploring their options.

The plans will lead to an increase in destitute people in the UK. Charities and other organisations which support destitute people are already at breaking point. The plans are likely to lead them to be stretched even further.

What are the implications for Refugee Action?

Refugee Action will cease delivering all elements of AVR and the Choices service will close. Refugee Action will reduce in size and we will be sad to say goodbye to many talented, experienced, values-driven and compassionate members of our team.

Refugee Action will continue to help people who have survived some of the world's worst regimes to secure the protection and support that they need to live with dignity and build a new life in the UK.



We remain committed to empowering refugees and asylum seekers to achieve justice and escape poverty through our ambitious campaigns and innovative programme of services across four regions of the UK (North West, London, West Midlands and Bristol).

Find out more about how to get involved and support Refugee Action at www.refugee-action.org.uk/support_us

What can I do if I want to feed back my views on these changes?

- James Brokenshire is the Minister for Immigration. You could email him with your views using: ministerforimmigration@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
- You could write to your MP and ask them to represent your views. Refugee Action has written an example letter, available on our website. You could use the following website: www.writetothem.com
- The Choices service is always interested in hearing feedback. If you would like to tell us what you think of our service you could email: ChoicesFeedback@refugee-action.org.uk

Appendix 7b: Refugee Action letter to James Brokenshire

16 July 2015

James Brokenshire MP
Minister of State (Home Office) (Security and Immigration)
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Mr Brokenshire

Re: Assisted Voluntary Return

We are writing to express our serious concern over current Home Office plans for the future of Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR). Up until now, the AVR programmes have been performing well with an average of 3,700 people per year¹ accessing the scheme, 98% of returnees receiving all of their reintegration assistance and 99% of returnees saying they are happy with the service they received. We understand the Home Office is currently planning to:

- Withdraw all funded independent impartial pre-decision advice from people who might consider return
- End eligibility to AVR for irregular migrants who do not meet a definition of vulnerability set by the Home Office
- Deliver AVR in-house within the Home Office from January 2016 onwards
- Change reintegration support with the changes currently unclear but potentially including cash only post return support with no reintegration assistance from an NGO, in-country – possibly for months but possibly indefinitely.

We urge you to reconsider these plans. They are unlikely to meet Home Office objectives or the needs of people considering or undertaking voluntary return. The planned changes would:

1. Lead to fewer overall people returning and in **particular fewer people choosing to voluntarily return** with assistance to support their reintegration
2. **Increase destitution** in the UK
3. **Increase costs** to the Home Office and other government departments
4. **Reduce the sustainability of returns**, increasing risks to people who return (and potentially threatening the use of AMIF funds which can cover 75% of the costs of AVR in the UK).

Fewer People Engaging with Voluntary Return

Rather than engaging people who are uncertain about return (as the Choices Service presently does), the Home Office has stated they will only focus on those who have already asked the Home Office to return. We were surprised to hear the Home Office state that withdrawing impartial, independent advice and delivery of AVR risks reducing the number of people who choose to return but that the Home Office is prepared to accept this risk. The planned changes will reduce

Refugee Action believes everyone seeking sanctuary in the UK should be able to live, not just survive. So we make sure people can find the basic support they need and have the chance to rebuild their lives.

Head office: Victoria Charity Centre 11 Belgrave Road London SW1V 1RB
Tel: 020 7952 1511 Fax: 0207 828 0973 www.refugee-action.org.uk
Refugee Action is a registered charity 283660

engagement with hard-to-reach people – ending a successful and non-coercive approach that empowers them to take control and move on in their lives.

Home Office commissioned research found that many asylum seekers and irregular migrants are suspicious of government funded returns programmesⁱⁱ. Feedback from returnees shows that many people will only apply for AVR if an independent organisation delivers the programmeⁱⁱⁱ. Prior to impartial advice about return becoming available, refugee and migrant community organisations reported that people were approaching them, requiring impartial advice about return but at that time there was no service for them to be referred to. Those who have been refused asylum are often distrustful of the Home Office because they have not been believed, because they feel they were wrongly refused or because they are now destitute as a result of the refusal. Regardless of whether or not the Home Office have determined that they meet the threshold for international protection, many have a genuine perception that they face risks upon return to their countries. Given the Home Office's stated policy of creating a 'hostile environment' for migrants, it is unrealistic to expect people in this position to approach the Home Office for voluntary return.

Independent impartial advice is a vital element of an AVR programme. Current data shows that over 75% of cases who receive impartial advice from Choices go on to apply for AVR^{iv}. Furthermore, the barriers to return that many face are often very complex, requiring a skillset and approach that is not compatible within the work of the Home Office and its stated policy of creating a hostile environment. Many cannot return without a range of assistance (for example those who have been trafficked, victims of domestic violence, children, families, those with physical or mental health needs). 60% of AVR applications in the first half of 2015 were made in cases assessed as 'complex' because of health issues, trafficking, domestic violence or other complexities. The most complex and vulnerable cases are made up of the people who the Home Office are least able to return and who are most likely to remain in the UK under current plans. Many will remain here in extremely difficult circumstances.

More Destitution in the UK

In 2014, just under 900 destitute or soon to be destitute people approached the Choices service across the UK. 60% went on to depart the UK through an AVR programme and received assistance to support their reintegration. Under section 17 of the Children's Act 1989, Local Authorities are compelled to provide accommodation and financial support to families containing children who have no recourse to public funds. The Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford believed there to be 3,391 families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) supported by Local Authorities in England and Wales in 2012/13^v. Local Authorities are also obliged to support those with additional needs (for example health needs that have resulted from years of destitution). Those who Local Authorities are not compelled to support often have no accommodation or income and are forced into risky, exploitative activities or rely on charities in order to subsist. Research from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust shows that many voluntary, charity and faith groups have reached breaking point attempting to support destitute people.^{vi}

The Home Office plans will lead to an increase in people living in destitution in the UK, an increase in families that Local Authorities are compelled to support and an increase in people forced into risky and exploitative activities in order to get by.

Increased costs

AVR costs on average £3,500 per return^{vii} in comparison to an average £15,000^{viii} per enforced removal. Removing independent impartial pre-decision advice and delivering AVR in-house directly by the Home Office will reduce the number of people returning. These people will either remain destitute in the UK with diminishing health, increasing costs to the NHS, or fall to Local Authorities to be supported. The Home Office estimate that each person living in the UK without leave to remain costs up to a further £4,250 per year in public services^{ix}. It is highly likely that the Home Office would find its own budget increasing. Over time it may be forced to grant status to people who have remained destitute in the UK for several years. Some of those who would have otherwise taken AVR will go on to be detained and some will be removed. If 20% of the average 3,700 people per year who would have departed via AVR were to go on to be forcibly removed instead, this will cost the

Home Office and taxpayer a **further £8.5 million** per year over the term of the current government.^x In reality, many more are likely to be removed – further increasing these additional costs, while the costs to other government departments are harder to quantify but likely to increase the overall additional cost to the taxpayer even further.

2014
n R

Less Sustainable Returns

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The sustainability of voluntary returns is, according to established research^{xi}, measured by indicators such as whether returnees fear persecution and other security threats and whether returnees have adequate opportunities to generate an income and access sufficient housing, subsistence, health and education. In order for people to have the best chances of rebuilding their lives, AVR has to have a focus on delivering sustainable outcomes. Without this focus, people may be at risk after returning and they are much more likely to become internally displaced or need to remigrate – regardless of any deterrence that a re-entry ban might provide. The need for AVRs to have an emphasis on sustainability is set out in the objectives of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)^{xii}. There is a significant risk that the lack of focus on sustainability in the Home Office plans will not only leave returnees in unsustainable positions but could also leave the department ineligible for the 75% of funding it is relying on from the AMIF. This risk is heightened if the Home Office did not conduct a consultation on its priorities for AMIF funding prior to agreeing its budget with the Commission. Without AMIF funding, the cost of AVR to the Home Office would increase by a further 300%.

Withdrawing independent, impartial advice, ending eligibility for irregular migrants who do not meet the definition of vulnerable, attempting delivery by the Home Office - which does not have a skills base in, and is not well positioned to manage vulnerabilities and reducing reintegration assistance will all negatively impact on the sustainability of returns. We are concerned that the Home Office plans for the future of AVR will not provide people with opportunities to achieve meaningfully sustainable outcomes.

We trust that this is a useful input to ongoing discussions about the future of AVR in the UK, and would be happy to meet you or to provide any further information that might be useful.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Ellis, Head of Policy, Research and Advocacy, British Red Cross
Laura Parker, Chief Executive Officer, Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB)
Maurice Wren, Chief Executive, Refugee Council
Sally Daghliah OBE, Chief Executive, Praxis Community Projects
Stephen Hale OBE, Chief Executive, Refugee Action

ⁱ Based on Choices return numbers 2011-2014

ⁱⁱ Factors affecting participation in assisted voluntary return programmes and successful reintegration: a review of the evidence - Thiel, D., & Gillian, K, 2010

ⁱⁱⁱ From July to September 2013 over half of detained AVR applicants applying for AVR cited, as a significant factor in their decision, the fact that the AVR programme was administered independently of the Home Office. This figure increased significantly with certain nationalities for whom protection concerns and detention at the receiving airport are important, for example Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

^{iv} In Q1 2015, 423 cases had at least one options advice session with Choices. By July 330 had gone on to submit applications for AVR.

^v Local Authority Responses to Families with 'no recourse to public funds' P57 - COMPASS, June 2015
https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/files/Publications/Reports/PR-2015-No_Recourse_Public_Funds_LAs.pdf

^{vi} Still Destitute, page 5- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, 2009
<http://www.jrct.org.uk/userfiles/documents/Still%20destitute%20%282009%20full%20research%20report%29.pdf>

^{vii} Based on the Choices years 1, 2 and 3 total returns numbers (11,222) and total expenditure for Choices (£40,160,924)

The politics of voluntary returns

November 11, 2010 — Comment



Written by [Frances Webber](#)

Outrage greeted French prime minister Sarkozy's description of the mass expulsion of Roma as 'voluntary' – but what is the reality of voluntary return programmes in the UK?

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), an intergovernmental body which implements most voluntary return schemes, received around £70 million from the Home Office since 2005 (including money from the EU Return Fund, its Refugee Fund and its Integration Fund) to operate a number of schemes, which since 1999, have (according to IOM's website) 'assisted more than 34,000 people to return to some 140 countries'.^[1] But do the current schemes for 'voluntary return', in the context of the government's accelerated deportation programme, offer a genuine, informed choice, or are they merely the alternative to forced deportations? What are the schemes, how do they work, and are they genuinely voluntary?

The schemes

The Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) has been in place since 1999 and is co-funded by the European Refugee Fund. Under VARRP, IOM, working with its UK partner, the charity Refugee Action, provides advice and help with obtaining travel documents and booking flights, and financial help with resettlement in the home country to current and former asylum seekers, up to a total of £1,500 per person. The package of help (to set up a business, a job placement, education or training) will be agreed while the applicant is still in the UK. Applicants (who must have made a claim for asylum which is either pending or has been rejected) are expected to leave the United Kingdom within three months of their application being approved. They must sign a declaration agreeing to the information on their file, including medical information, potentially being shared with the UK Border Agency and other UK government departments, agencies, local authorities, law enforcement agencies if needed to help those bodies to carry out their functions. By returning, they withdraw their asylum application in the UK, and are warned that they may be subject to a re-entry ban to the UK for up to five years. They have to sign an indemnity declaring that IOM is not liable for personal injury or death during and/or after their participation in the IOM programme.^[2]

Assisted Voluntary Return of Irregular Migrants (AVRIM) was a programme for illegal entrants and overstayers, which provided help leaving the UK (including in obtaining travel documents) and reaching a final destination in the home country, but generally did not provide financial resettlement assistance. The scheme was closed at the end of August 2010.

Assisted Voluntary Return for Families and Children (AVRFC) is a new programme which started in April 2010. It is available to any non-EEA citizen with at least one child, whether they have ever applied for asylum or not, and to unaccompanied children, and consists of a cash relocation grant of £500 per person and a package of reintegration assistance of up to £2,000 per person.

Anyone returning under one of these voluntary return programmes is normally banned from

returning to the UK for five years under the immigration rules.

Facilitated Returns Scheme (FRS) is a voluntary returns scheme for foreign national prisoners (FNPs), and accounts for nearly a third of all FNP removals. The scheme was introduced in 2006. Since October 2009, the package given to non-EEA prisoners who agree to leave the UK at the end of their sentence includes a £500 cash payment and a reintegration package worth up to £3,000 – or up to £5,000 for those who leave before the end of their sentence, either under the Early Removal Scheme or by applying to continue their sentence in their home country. The reintegration package is paid in kind, and is used to set up a business, or help in education or accommodation. According to Home Office evidence to the Home Affairs Committee,[3] the scheme, which has cost a total of £4.3million since its introduction, saves the government an estimated £14 million a year in freed-up prison and detention centre places, as well as unquantified UKBA caseworking costs and legal aid saved in not having to fight deportation appeals. Those agreeing to return voluntarily under FRS have as little prospect of return to the UK as those who are deported. Deportees have to wait on average ten years before they can apply to have deportation orders revoked, but the Home Office claims that foreign national prisoners removed under the facilitated returns scheme are not allowed to return to the UK except in the most exceptional compassionate circumstances.

The IOM in Europe and Africa

Assisted voluntary return schemes are not unique to the UK. Such schemes were common in Europe in the 1970s as a means of disposing of unwanted 'guest workers'. The Dutch government introduced a scheme in 1974 for guest workers from Turkey, Tunisia and Morocco, and schemes were introduced in France in 1977 and in Germany in 1983. The schemes all suffered from a very low take-up rate, and some were discontinued in the 1980s, but they have made something of a come-back in recent years, and by 2009, eleven EU member states and Switzerland had programmes, all administered by the IOM – which also runs programmes in transit countries such as Libya, funded by European governments and the European Commission.[4] A recent Council of Europe report called on member states to use more voluntary return programmes as an alternative to expulsion, highlighting in particular the financial savings (a 'voluntary return' with re-integration assistance costs on average just one-third of the cost of a forced expulsion, and even less if detention costs are taken into account), and pointing to the UK's programmes as examples of successful schemes.[5] But at the other extreme, the French government's attempt to label as 'voluntary' its mass expulsion of over 1,000 Romanian Roma (all of whom, as EU nationals, had the right to stay in France), by giving them each 300 euros in exchange for signing a declaration that their deportation was 'voluntary', was rejected in strong terms by European justice commissioner Viviane Reding, who likened the expulsions to Nazi-era deportations. [6]

Not sustainable

Assisted voluntary returns are sometimes presented as a way of achieving justice for those forced out by war or persecution, or as ways in which migrants can take back skills learned in the host country for post-conflict reconstruction efforts at home. But studies have shown that these justifications for returns programmes do not match what actually happens to those returned.[7] The assistance the IOM provides returnees is by its nature very short-term and piecemeal. The IOM cannot reverse illegal expropriations or otherwise ensure that justice is done in returnees' home countries. Nor can it ensure political stability or personal security for those returning home. Its website, while celebrating individual success stories, acknowledges that it does not monitor voluntary returnees (though if an individual receives

reintegration assistance on return, contact is maintained for up to a year). The governments which fund the voluntary return programmes do not monitor returnees' reintegration and success either. But a 2009 study of forty-eight voluntary returnees to Sri Lanka by the Migration Development Research Centre (DRC) found that nearly all twenty-nine Tamils in the sample had suffered racial harassment from police or other officials since their return, and four had suffered serious human rights abuses. Forty-four of the forty-eight in the sample had started businesses, but twenty had closed and another twenty provided a living at or below subsistence level. Only four generated a profit above subsistence level.[8]

According to the Migration DRC, historically, most government schemes to promote return that are linked with investment in small business have been viewed as failures. The short-term and limited nature of the assistance provided, and the lack of monitoring, makes the IOM's claim to 'contribute to a more sustainable return' somewhat hollow.

Insecurity

The most important determinant of refugees' ability to return is security in the destination country – political stability and personal security. But in the aftermath of conflict, the different experiences of war and exile among those who stayed and those who fled intensify ethnic, religious or tribal divisions. Frequently, the authorities and the local people in the country of origin are very hostile to returnees – particularly if they are from ethnic minorities. Seeking asylum abroad may be seen as akin to disloyalty, inviting official suspicion and racism. A study of returning refugees conducted by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE),[9] which consulted refugee community organisations in five European countries as well as conducting field trips to countries of origin, found that repatriates from Belgium to Russia with no family to help them are 'beaten up in the streets where they try to sleep at night; they are driven away from entrance halls of apartment blocks where they seek warmth; they are driven away from railway stations and airports, too. Many of them turn into hobos (people without permanent addresses and homes) and eventually die'. Internally displaced (IDP) Chechnyans in Ingushetia who were provided with assistance to set up small businesses found their livelihoods destroyed by deportation or by destruction of their businesses within a relatively short time, making the prospects for successful (re)integration remote.

Such a combination of difficulties appears to have been behind the Iraqi authorities' refusal to accept three-quarters of the Kurdish passengers on the first forced-removal charter flight from the UK to Baghdad in October 2009. The head of immigration services in Baghdad was reported as saying that the Kurds would be at physical risk in Baghdad and he would not be responsible for their safety. It seems wholly unrealistic to expect any Kurd to volunteer for return to such conditions – yet the government's efforts to induce Iraqi Kurds to return to central Iraq, by hook or by crook, continue unabated.

Not voluntary

But there is a more fundamental objection with the 'assisted voluntary returns' programmes, which is that they are not genuinely voluntary. This matters most in relation to asylum-seekers, including rejected asylum-seekers. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), in its guidelines on voluntary repatriation, states that the 'principle of voluntariness is the cornerstone of international protection with respect to the return of refugees', and it must be viewed in relation to both (a) conditions in the country of origin (calling for an informed choice) and (b) the situation in the country of asylum (permitting a free choice).

Virtually none of the schemes currently operating as 'voluntary return programmes' from the UK meets these criteria for voluntariness. Voluntary return is frequently offered as a less

painful alternative to continued destitution followed by (inevitable) compulsory return, and it is generally impossible for the returnee to have an informed choice about the country they are returning to.

The way that voluntary repatriation schemes are presented to parliamentary committees and to the public – as measures enabling the government to get rid of people who are not wanted – reveals the true rationale of most returns programmes, and is the key to the main problem with them. They are generally devised in response to a perceived need to remove excessive numbers of asylum seekers, irregular migrants or foreign national prisoners back to countries such as Iraq or Afghanistan, Sri Lanka or Zimbabwe, rather than as a response to the desire of particular communities to return home. The priority is a governmental one, of saving money – whether it be on detention costs, as in the FRS scheme, or on asylum and social services support, as in the AVRFC and VARRP schemes.

For example, AVRFC has been put in place as the government seeks to make massive cuts in the support provided to vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors, who at present are allowed to remain in the UK up to the age of seventeen and a half. Recent reports indicate that the coalition plans to end this by removing lone children from the UK. In early 2010, the Home Office revealed plans to set up a 'reintegration centre' in Kabul so that failed Afghan child asylum-seekers could be returned home.^[10] Having such centres in place make it easier for the government to begin withdrawing support from children whose asylum claims have been rejected, and then to start forced removals (which at present are impossible under human rights law, because of the lack of reception and care facilities in the home country). The likelihood is that children and young people in need of protection, facing the prospect of forced removal and the reality of withdrawal of financial and social services support, will opt for 'voluntary' removal.

The IOM's main 'client base' is thus not the migrants it transports and resettles, but the governments on whose behalf it does so.

Informed choice: knowledge of conditions in the country of origin

Refugees and other migrants who have been away from their country of origin for some time need thorough, unbiased and detailed information about conditions that will affect them if they return. Information from UKBA, or from the IOM, is inevitably tainted in the eyes of refugees as not disinterested. Refugee Action, a charity which has worked with the IOM on voluntary returns since 1997, provides information to asylum seekers considering return. But while the voluntary return programme, rather than being concerned with durable solutions for refugees, remains part of enforcement strategy (a position which Refugee Action itself condemns), its association with UKBA and the IOM means that the information it provides, however impartial, is likely to be viewed as suspect.

Genuine choice to leave or to stay

UNHCR's second criterion for 'voluntariness' is that the choice to leave must be genuine and not induced. This generally requires that the 'volunteer' has a legal basis for stay in the host country. A 2003 survey of Afghan attitudes to returning home, prepared for the IOM and Refugee Action, found that immigration status was the most important personal factor affecting the desire for return, with those with secure status most interested in return.^[11] Settled status gives confidence and the ability to make choices, secure in the knowledge that return to Britain is possible if things do not work out. The groups targeted by the return programmes – asylum seekers and others with insecure status, were least likely to want to return to their countries of origin. When consent to return is elicited as a result of lack of effective protection in the host country or because of an imposition of sanctions, this cannot

be classified as voluntary repatriation', says ECRE.[12]

In other words, repatriation cannot be termed 'voluntary' where the alternative is utter destitution, with denial of accommodation, basic support and the opportunity to work, or the prospect of children being taken into care, or months or years in detention. Nor can it be 'voluntary' where the prospect of obtaining recognition as a refugee has become remote because the system for the determination of asylum claims and appeals is deliberately under-funded, depriving increasing numbers of asylum seekers of any legal representation for this supremely important legal decision.

This is the situation that obtains for asylum seekers, particularly rejected asylum seekers in the UK. In ECRE's words, 'the ... Home Office has consistently and for many years resorted to measures that force asylum seekers to agree for voluntary repatriation ... These include taking away legal rights and welfare payments or denying basic facilities.' [13]

Explore and prepare

Of the IOM's 'voluntary' schemes, then, the only schemes which could truly be classed as 'voluntary' were the 'Explore and Prepare' programmes which funded refugees from certain countries such as Kosovo (1999-2000) and Afghanistan (2002-8) to go back on exploratory visits for up to a year without prejudice to their entitlement to come back to the UK. These programmes offered people a realistic chance to assess whether return home was feasible or not, and if not, their continued stay in the UK was assured. (Even these schemes were however somewhat compromised in that they took place in a climate of increasing pressure to return, where humanitarian leave was not being renewed and forced removals were taking place.)

But there have been very few such schemes. Other AVR programmes do not allow return to the UK if things go wrong, forcing the desperate and destitute to gamble everything on a safe return to their country of origin.

The lack of a system of monitoring of returnees, and their inability to return to the UK after voluntary assisted removal, are features which might explain the very low take-up on voluntary return schemes. Zimbabwe is a classic example. Zimbabweans have been in a particularly desperate situation in the UK for some years. Although the Home Office did not enforce removal to Zimbabwe, it refused to grant status to more than a small proportion, despite recognition by the courts of the dangers facing all Zimbabwean deportees on return, with the rest often surviving on the charity of friends. But despite the increase in the amount of assistance on offer for 'voluntary return' from £4,000 to £6,000 in February 2009, only ninety Zimbabweans had signed up for voluntary return in the first eight months of 2009. The reintegration assistance was changed from 'in-kind' to cash in October 2009. It is too early to say whether this additional 'bribe' will make a difference to the rate of voluntary return, but it is unlikely – the fear of return outweighs the attraction of the incentive package.

While long-term refugees with settled status or even British citizenship might find the idea of return to their homeland attractive, more recent asylum seekers who have risked life and limb, and spent vast sums of money, to reach safety and some sort of life in the UK, and do not have the security of settled status, generally see the idea of 'voluntary return' as anathema. One Afghan asylum seeker interviewed in 2003 summed up the widespread disgust at the idea of being paid to go back under a voluntary returns scheme: 'It is as if our lives are being bought for £600. If the situation improves, we will not need £600 to go back'. [14]

[11] UK Border Agency response to Freedom of Information request, FOI 13808. The

response also details other IOM projects funded by UKBA, including irregular migration management in countries as diverse as Angola, China, Djibouti and Libya, strengthening the capacity of the Nigerian immigration service, reception for forced returns in Somaliland and voluntary returns in Kyrgyzstan, 'sensitisation' in the DRC, and the Calais project, which involves voluntary returns and 'tackling migratory flows at source and transit points'. [2] Application form for VAARP, at <http://www.iomlondon.org/doc/varrp/VARRP%20Application%20Form.pdf>. [3] Lin Homer to HAC, 4 February 2010, <http://deposits.parliament.uk>, DEP2010-0354. The removal statistics do not break down 'voluntary removals' from other removals. [4] See Briefing No 20, September 2009, Migration Development Research Centre, University of Sussex, 'Voluntary assisted return (AVR): An opportunity for development?'. [5] Council of Europe Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population: 'Voluntary return programmes: an effective, humane and cost-effective mechanism for returning irregular migrants', June 2010. The Centre of Studies and Documentation on Migration, Racism and Xenophobia (MUGAK) published a critical response, see *Statewatch News*, 4 October 2010, 'The fiction of migration control policies'. [6] See *Guardian*, 14 September 2010, 'Roma deportations by France a disgrace, says EU'. [7] The 'restoration' argument falters on the evidence that most returnees never get back to their previous home, because it has either been destroyed or expropriated, while the lack of mechanisms for matching returnees' skills to the needs of reconstruction renders the 'human capital' argument invalid. See Blitz and Sales, 'Non-Voluntary Return? The politics of return to Afghanistan', *Political Studies* 53:1, March 2003. [8] Briefing No 20, see note 4 above. [9] ECRE, 2005, 'Increasing refugee participation in the field of voluntary return'. [10] See *Al Jazeera*, 8 June 2010, 'UK plans to deport Afghan children'. [11] Blitz and Sales, 'Non-Voluntary Return? The politics of return to Afghanistan', *Political Studies* 53:1, March 2003. This finding replicated earlier findings presented to IOM in the context of voluntary return programmes to Africa. [12] *ibid.* [13] *ibid.* [14] Cited in Blitz and Sales, *op cit.*

The Institute of Race Relations is precluded from expressing a corporate view: any opinions expressed are therefore those of the authors.

Comments

January 9, 2012

Dave Garratt, Chief Executive Refugee Action:

Frances Congratulations on a well thought out article – there was much in it that rings depressingly true. Inevitably I disagree with your comments about RA's involvement in voluntary return. I don't want to get in to a detailed public argument about it, but I do need to clarify a few of the things you've said: 1) RA does not 'actively encourage' anybody to take up voluntary return, we give confidential, non-directive and impartial advice to people who have a complex, restricted and difficult decision to make. Crucially, we support people to make their decisions, we do not influence or push people towards a particular course of action. 2) Being able to give this impartial advice is one of the fundamental reasons for being involved in the programme. I wish people didn't have this decision to make. I wish it wasn't, for all the reasons you give, such a restricted decision – but it is a decision, and a difficult one – which is why we at RA believe so passionately that people should be able to receive information and advice around it. 3) I also wish it were true that 'lawyers advise on the options, the pros and cons' but we both know that, in this area, they don't. The experience of our many thousands of clients a year is mainly one of receiving no or poor quality legal advice (for all the 'legal aid funding' reasons you outline). Even where good legal advice is present, it cannot cover the detailed, specialised and often long term advice people need around voluntary return – put simply, legal advice for asylum seekers is, rightly, about

protection issues, our voluntary return advice is about giving the holistic and wide-ranging advice people need to decide whether voluntary return is in their best interest. Far from trying to provide a nosegay then, we at RA would say that it is precisely because the reality facing our clients stinks so much, especially at point of final asylum refusal, that it is important that organisations like ours strive to support and advise them through it. In this context then, I simply disagree that our contract to provide voluntary return services means RA is 'acting to legitimise and to enforce Home Office policy.' However, clearly this debate, and indeed the issues raised in the IPPR report are more complex than I've outlined here. If you'd like to discuss these in person, I'd be more than happy to meet up, my office number is 0203 176 2511. Dave Garratt CEO Refugee Action

July 23, 2013
Githinji:

I would like to say that the now defunct I.O.M AVRIM scheme, was a back door deportation set-up when the Authorities would failed to find legitimate ways to force people out. Having been a victim of this deception myself, I can testify that I.O.M is NOT independent of the client states where they operate, and are therefore stooges of these countries. I'm absolutely convinced, that I.O.M works in tandem with mainly western Governments to remove people of certain races from their populations by lying to the unwitting deportees, that the programme is benign and that they may re-apply to return at any time, as long as they meet the threshold. THIS IS A COMPLETE HOAX!!

August 20, 2015
N:

MY SON WAS GIVEN FACILITATED RETURN SCHEME BY UK BOARDER AGENCY WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE. HE HAD TO GO BACK TO SOUTH AFRICA AND WAS GIVEN 750 POUNDS. HE WAS ONLY 5 YEARS OLD WHEN HE LEFT SOUTH AFRICA. 15 YEARS LATER HE RETURNS BACK TO RSA AND LIVES IN THE STREETS WITHOUT FOOD, ACCOMMODATION. IN ADDITION TO THAT HE WAS MENTALLY ILL BUT THE UK BOADER AGENCY DID NOT CARE ABOUT HIS WELFARE. AS A PARENT I HAD TO GIVE UP EVERYTHING IN SEARCH FOR MY SON. THANK GOD, I FOUND HIM ALIVE. HE WAS HOMELESS AND WAS LIKE A ROEIGNER IN HIS OWN COUNTRY BECAUSE OF UK BOARDER AGENCY. WHERE IS JUSTICE. I NEED TO REMEDY THIS SITUATION BEFORE WE LOOSE OUR CHILDREN. MY SON IS ON MEDICATION FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE. SOMEONE MUST HELP ME STOP THIS CORRUPTION AND EXPLOITATION BY UK BOARDER AGENCY.

Appendix 8: Glossary of acronyms

ARE	Appeal Rights Exhausted
AVR	Assisted Voluntary Return
AVRFC	Assisted Voluntary Return for Families and Children
AVRIM	Assisted Voluntary Return for Irregular Migrants
ETD	Emergency Travel Documents
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child or Children
UKBA	United Kingdom Borders Agency
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VARRP	Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme

